THE FORMATION OF GODLY LEADERS:

THE APPLICATION OF VIRTUE ETHICS TO THE PROGRAM OF

THE *UNIVERSIDAD CRISTIANA INTERNACIONAL ESEPA*

SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

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DEDICATION

In gratitude to our God for his unmerited mercy in Christ Jesus, I dedicate this work to my wife, Barbi, a lover of God and a virtuous woman, and to our three children, Carol Ann, Jesse Paul, and Carissa Joy. No accomplishment that I have achieved surpasses the gift of their love.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

In order for a theological institution to shape the character of its students, it is essential to have a comprehensive theory to guide the institution's effort. In this work, we have proposed that the theory of virtue ethics serves as a paradigm to achieve this goal. This study addresses only one essential element in the application of virtue ethics: the students' pre-understanding of character formation and how it affects their attitudes and expectations. The project is a qualitative study that seeks to measure the congruence and divergence of students' attitudes and expectations regarding the seminary's objective to shape their character during their time of study at the *Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA* in San José, Costa Rica. The study is built around a semester course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders,* which presented virtue ethics as paradigm of character formation and how it applied to the students' studies and to the seminary's objective. A survey was conducted at the beginning of the course. Another survey was conducted six months later. After completing the course, the data shows a higher degree of congruence in the students' understanding of character formation and considerable change in their attitudes and expectations for the seminary's involvement in the formation of their character.

CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND SETTING

A godly character is indispensable for Christian leadership. Nothing that one can offer is able to replace the dispositions of heart, mind, and will that reflect the love and holiness of God in Christ. When these go wanting in the life of a Christian leader, the gifts and abilities that he[1] possesses lack that essential element that gives credibility to his work and coherent witness to the gospel.

The recognition that leaders should be persons of sterling character is not just a modern concern. Indeed, the need to appreciate and pursue character formation arises from the fact that as human beings we come into the world as an unfinished work of art.[2] No matter what our natural predispositions might be at birth, we are not born with a fully developed moral character. We do not even possess an inborn comprehension of what is socially acceptable to eat or how we should dress; neither do we know in what circumstances or manner we are to express appropriate empathy or dislikes. Such knowledge is acquired in our childhood through our families and the communities to which we belong. In the same way, character is acquired and formed—for good or for ill—within the social contexts of our lives: in the daily routines and interchanges with others, in the assorted life-situations we face, and by the many choices we make. Formed in this way, our character

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[1] For the sake of fluidity, the masculine pronoun *he* and/or *his* will be employed instead of *he/she* or *his/her* when an unspecified or gender neutral antecedent is implied in the text.

[2] Peter L. Berger calls this aspect of human reality the "unspecialized character of [human] instinctual structure." As a consequence of which he asserts, "Man must *make* a world for himself." This includes, according to Berger, the values that comprise the constitutive aspects of culture. See *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 5. The emphasis is the author's.

expresses the essence of who we are, the commitments we hold, and the convictions that fashion the vision of our moral horizons.

The correlation between the individual character of the leader and the well-being of the community is clearly seen in Scripture. Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan." Under the leadership of Moses, Joshua, and David, for example, the nation of Israel enjoyed increasing prosperity as they realized the purposes of the covenant that God had made with the nation. However, under those leaders who played false with the covenant, whose lives were given over to evil, the community declined morally and eventually suffered chastisement through captivity. The New Testament bears witness to this same reality. The apostle Paul writes to his younger lieutenant, Timothy, instructing him that an "overseer must be blameless" (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul's urgency in writing to Timothy resided in the fact that there were leaders in the church in Ephesus who had begun to reject sound teaching, and whose lifestyles had brought reproach to the gospel and the reputation of the church.

In the history of Western civilization the character of a leader has been seen as a matter of first importance. Plato, for example, in his work, *The Republic*, asserted that the essential qualification for rulers, the Guardians, as he called them, was character. The basis of his argument was straightforward: rulers with good character were "most likely to devote their lives to doing what they judged to be in the interest of the community." If the leaders were self-serving and given to vice, social disintegration would certainly follow. As Plato says, "The community suffers nothing very terrible if its cobblers are bad

and become degenerate and pretentious; but if the Guardians of the laws and state, who alone have the opportunity to bring it good government and prosperity, become a mere sham, then clearly it is completely ruined."[3] Leaders affect the community they lead; the character of the leader is an essential link between the two.

Character has become a subject of considerable importance among leadership specialists, and their works on leadership echo the sentiment of both biblical and classical wisdom. In the introduction to the 2003 edition of Warren Bennis's work, *On Becoming a Leader*, he bluntly states, "Leadership is always about character."[4] Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath write, "Character—the inner world of motives and values that shapes our actions—is the ultimate determiner of the nature of our leadership."[5] Kouzes and Posner have written, "Above all else, people want leaders who are credible. We want to believe in our leaders. We want to have faith and confidence in them as people. We want to believe that their word can be trusted....Credibility is the foundation of leadership."[6] In other words, the quality of one's character impacts all aspects of a leader's work and ministry. Consistency, faithfulness,

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[3] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee, (London: Penguin Books 1987), 119, 127.
[4] Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (New York: Basic Book, 2003) xxii. In the same work Bennis says, "The…basic ingredient of leadership is integrity. I think there are three essential parts of integrity: self-knowledge, candor, and maturity." 32.
[5] Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 1-2.
[6] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain it and Lose it, Why People Demand it* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), p. 22. To the works quoted above we can also add Steven R. Covey whose works have underlined the importance of character. Covey's principle-centered leadership is character based and underscores the 'inside-out' principal by which he means "to start first with self—to start with the most *inside* part of self—with your paradigms, your character, and your motives…If you want to be trusted, *be* trustworthy. If you want the secondary greatness of public recognition, focus first on primary greatness of character." *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1990) 62. Emphasis is the author's.

and dependability enable others to follow, while deception, dishonesty, or the abuse of power destroy trust and instill suspicion within the community. Character builds trust that links leaders with followers. But it also functions internally to provide a leader with a source of direction and with an equally important source of restraint. As Guinness puts it, character is "part gyroscope and part brake. In many instances, the first prompting to do good and the last barrier against doing wrong are the same—character."[7] Clearly, character counts. No matter how competent one may be in terms of the tasks that befall a leader, a well-developed moral vision and the disposition to do right and to refrain from the wrong remain indispensable.

How do these experts in leadership theory understand the process of character formation? What steps do they promote in order to become a leader of character? The first prerequisite advocated is self-knowledge: who am I? What do I believe to be important and why? In their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner call attention to the fact that past leaders who stand out as role models for present day leaders were people who held "unwavering commitment to a clear set of values."[8] Thus, they point out that self-knowledge and deeply held beliefs form the foundational stones upon which character of a leader is built. In order to clearly articulate deeply held convictions, Kouzes and Posner promote a process of values clarification.

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[7] Os Guinness, *When No One Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 2000), xx.

[8] James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge,* 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 47.

While the quest for self-understanding through values clarification is undoubtedly beneficial for leadership development, it is open to question whether it is adequate for the formation of Christian leaders without some qualifications. The language of "values" only tells half of the story. It is possible to come to recognize those objects, concepts, actions, and attitudes that we approve of through a deep introspective gaze. This can be a salutary exercise that leads to significant self-awareness and personal growth; it has been heartily commended in Western society ever since the Greeks inscribed "Know Thyself" over the Oracle at Delphi. However, the language of values only "affirms the subjective side of the issue;"[9] it does not address the question of whether the values that we so dearly hold are worth embracing. While it is important for any leader to have a keen self-knowledge, such knowledge alone is insufficient to form the basis of those values that encourage, motivate, and guide a Christian leader. There is, then, a need for a theory of character formation that takes into account factors other than an interior gaze, one that unites the rich resources of our biblical and theological Christian heritage with the development of a Christian leader's self-understanding. This is a very important subject, and it is one to which we will return, but first we need to place the issue of character formation in *Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA* in its larger context.

Historical and Cultural Context

In the last thirty years, the evangelical church in Latin America has experienced unprecedented growth. Throughout the continent, the increase in

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[9] David W. Gill, *Becoming Good* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 29.

the number of evangelicals has been so significant that it has caught the attention of both British and North American observers, generating several studies.[10] Commenting on the rapid increase of evangelical believers, Núñez and Taylor reported in 1989, "While the general population grows at an annual rate of 2.2 percent, Evangelicals grow at a rate at least twice that clip and in some countries three times as fast."[11]

Costa Rica has been part of this continent-wide exponential growth. At the beginning of the 1970's, after nearly one hundred years of evangelical outreach, Protestants made up 1.8 percent of the population,[12] while at the end of the 1980's the percentage stood at 8.9. Seen in the light of its historical context, this growth is truly impressive. The earliest recorded survey of the Costa Rican population that included the number of Protestants was 1892; the percentage recorded that year was 0.2%. This number continued virtually unchanged until the 1950's, when the church made up 1% of the population. Throughout the 1950's and 1960's the evangelical church grew slowly to 1.8%. However, a 1974 survey found that the church had increased to 3.0% of the population. Other surveys conducted throughout the decades of the seventies and early eighties showed a slow but consistent growth. In 1989 a CID-Gallup survey directed by John Kessler established that 8.9% of Costa Rican adults claimed to be Evangelical. In 1991 Kessler conducted a second survey and

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[10] See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell) 1990; David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (Berkeley, CA: UCLA Press, 1990).

[11] Emilio Núñez and William Taylor, *Crisis and Hope in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 159.

[12] The statistics are taken from Jorge I. Gómez's work, *El Crecimiento y la Deserción en la Iglesia Evangélica Costarricense* (San José, Costa Rica: Publicaciones IINDEF, 1996), 22-26.

found that the evangelical church had continued to grow to 10.6% of the population. Presently, 13.7% of the population identify themselves as Evangelical.[13] This phenomenal growth was preceded by many years of sowing the good seed of the gospel; many worked without seeing much fruit for their efforts. Today, the conditions under which the Evangelical church labors are quite different than they were even fifty years ago.

In Latin America, the fastest growing ministries are autochthonous (indigenous or grass root) mega-churches. Retaining little or no connection with U.S. or European mission agencies, these churches are led by strong autocratic leaders who are usually Pentecostal or charismatic in doctrine and practice. In some cases, the grass roots church is a breakaway from the parent denomination or mission agency. A number are churches that have been founded by Catholic charismatics, who were either forced out of the church by the Roman Catholic hierarchy or left due to doctrinal differences. In other cases, autochthonous churches were founded by a mission organization from another Latin American country. While the origin of these churches differ, they all share some common characteristics, which, according the Berg and Pretiz, consist in the fact that they are

> under leadership that is less educated, but spiritually vital. These
> churches experience development that is often disorderly and
> competitive—but there is growth. And they are composed of people
> less interested in doctrine than knowing God experientially. In all of
> these churches, and in all of their variety, we find a common
> denominator: a flame in the hearts of Latin Americans to create their

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[13] Reported in the CIA World Factbook [on-line], www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ page 3 of 9; Internet; accessed 6/25/2004.

own expressions of the Body of Christ in the churches that they themselves establish.[14]

Many aspects of the Latin American autochthonous churches are positive. The churches are not dependent on foreign aid or initiative to accomplish their mission. They are zealous in the proclamation of the gospel and compassionate in meeting the needs of their congregants. They acknowledge the intrinsic dignity of the socially marginalized by allowing their God-given gifts to be used, and, therefore, provide them a sense of place and identity within an alternative society, the church.

Notwithstanding these strengths, there are issues that call for our attention. Popular religiosity, a mix of Christian and cultural beliefs that distort the gospel, has spread among evangelical churches, particularly the grass roots churches. In his work on the history of the church in Latin America, Pablo Deiros clarifies the term "popular religiosity" by pointing out that the word "popular" is to be understood in the sense that it "belongs to all."[15] It does not signify, as it does in English, something fashionable or trendy. Popular religiosity has mass appeal that cuts across class distinctions and addresses the fears and hopes of the people. It emphasizes pragmatic solutions to life's problems through faith. This feature of popular religiosity is

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[14] Mike Berg and Paul Pretiz, *Spontaneous Combustion: Grass-Roots Christianity, Latin American Style* (Miami: Latin America Mission, 1996), 32.

[15] "Este protestantismo es popular en el sentido de que pertenece a todos." Pablo Alberto Dieros, *Historia del Cristianismo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1992), 164.

commendable, as it seeks to minister to the perceived needs of the people. Yet in spite of this strength, Deiros registers a number of serious shortcomings.[16]

The aggressive evangelism of grass roots churches is often superficial, leading to something less than a full-orbed New Testament ethic. The numerical success of grass roots churches does not always result in the practice of a biblical discipleship that produces authentic change of private and public norms and behavior. As Núñez and Taylor put it, "Latin American evangelicals love the Bible but are biblically illiterate. Yes, they love the Word of God, but they have a superficial working knowledge of it. Hence there is a poor integration of biblical truth to the problems of life."[17] This phenomenon is closely linked to the populism of the movement, which is reflected in an anti-intellectualism that spurns serious study and often makes a false dichotomy between those who study with those who are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, being immaterial, is superior to merely fleshly concerns; he gives insight without study and is existentially present to bestow direct access to the mind of God. As a result, doctrinal truth that entails intellectual engagement and requires time to assimilate is either played down or dismissed out of hand. While one can appreciate impatience with abstract doctrine that is inattentive to the life of the ordinary believer, there is a greater problem: underneath the rejection of serious study is an ignorance of basic biblical teachings. This mindset is part of a long tradition that did not emerge with the autochthonous churches; rather, it is "[t]he cultural heritage

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[16] Ibid., 176-177.
[17] Núñez and Taylor, *Crisis and Hope,* 162.

of five centuries of superficial religion, a Latin American mindset that concerns itself with the existential now, an emotional penchant that minimizes the intellectual discipline of biblical study."[18]

Of particular concern is the authority that autochthonous church leaders exercise over the lives of their followers. Generally, grass roots churches revolve around a strong charismatic leader who, through great personal sacrifice and daring, establishes a remarkable ministry, mission, or congregation with little or no financial or human resources. As the ministry grows, the imprint of the leader's personality is so indelibly engraved upon the organization that in his or her absence its existence is nearly inexplicable.

Moreover, numerical and financial success often functions as a self-validating mechanism that authenticates the leader's person, words, and actions. Success is the evidence par excellence that the leader is God's chosen instrument, his anointed servant. Such attitudes are often mitigated by the leader's commitment to biblical truth. Nevertheless, in the worst case scenario, when such a leader is carried away by heretical teachings, the indicators of success serve to bolster, against all claims to the contrary, the supposed veracity of his teaching. Thus, the very signs which, in the popular mind, give credibility to the leader's exercise of authority become the buttress of self-deception and the apologia against all detractors. In the face of such supposed divine sanction, congregants either acquiesce to the leader or leave the church, often receiving the titles *rebeldes* (rebellious ones), who refuse to submit to God's anointed. Nida has called attention to the dangers of this

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[18] Ibid., 164.

type of leadership, writing it can "degenerate into irresponsible…'bossism.' These strong leaders sometimes demand the kind of blind devotion with which the people may have been formerly familiar in the Roman Church."[19]

In many cases, these leaders function as benign dictators whose exercise of authority is directed toward the good of the community. Nevertheless, when it is misdirected it becomes the cause of great personal harm and damages the testimony of the evangelical church in general.[20] What is more, the acceptance authoritarian leadership does not arise in a vacuum; there is within the cultural milieu a tendency to believe that God's rule and blessings are directly mediated through "anointed" leadership. This view is held as much by followers as by leaders. For this reason leaders are often venerated, treated with privilege, and given undo obedience. Consequently, any challenge to the authority of a leader, whether perceived or real, is all too often understood as a satanic attack that must be dealt with accordingly. In light of these cultural tendencies, it is not difficult to see the need for character formation. As with all leaders and persons in positions of influence, the difference between seeking the greater good or giving into the temptation to abuse power lies in the character of the leader.

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[19] Eugene A. Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans,* 2nd edition (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1976), 146.

[20] With little or no need for academic or ecclesiastical credentials or oversight, some misguided pastors have turned out to be the equivalent of religious hucksters. There was a notable case in Costa Rica in 1992 when the press exposed Zacarías Pérez, who left a recognized denomination to start his own church, Roca del Pedernal, in the town, Barranca. During church services, "lights were dimmed and physical contact between the sexes was encouraged as part of the group's 'spiritual union.'" When this information came to light through the press, the town's people gathered and pillaged the church. The police intervened and Zacarías was charged with immoral acts." In Berg and Pretiz, *Spontaneous Combustion*, 136-137.

The need for character formation within the Costa Rican evangelical church was made apparent with the publication of a study entitled *El Crecimiento y la Deserción en la Iglesia Evangélica Costarricense*[21] (*Growth and Desertion in the Costa Rican Evangelical Church*) by Jorge Gómez. In it the author investigated the reasons why people desert evangelical churches in Costa Rica. We have already noted the large numbers that have come into the evangelical church in the last fifty years. What we did not note was the high number of those who, during the same period, had also deserted the church. Nearly one out of every two Costa Ricans who have at one time in their lives embraced Protestantism has abandoned the church. As Gómez puts it, "Of the nearly 20% of the population that at one time or another was or is Protestant, only 10% claimed to be Protestant at the time of the study."[22]

What caused such a large percentage of the population to desert the Costa Rican evangelical church? According to the research conducted by Gómez, the five top reasons are 1) the personal conduct of the people who left the evangelical church, that is, those who deserted the church felt they were unable to live a lifestyle commensurate with the church's teaching; 2) the lack of someone to disciple and mentor new converts in their spiritual walk; 3) the bad conduct and testimony of church members; 4) the bad conduct of the pastor or church leadership; 5) pressures from friends or family members.[23] While Gómez's study focused on the discipleship methods and strategies of

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[21] Jorge Gómez, *Crecimiento*.

[22] "Aproximadamente una de cada dos personas que fueron protestantes en algún período de su vida han abandonado la iglesia. Es decir, del casi 20% de la población que en algún momento de su vida fue o es protestante, solo un 10% era protestante al momento del estudio. Así que la deserción es más alta de lo percibida por muchos pastores y líderes nacionales." Ibid., 133.

[23] Ibid., 134.

the Costa Rican evangelical church, it is obvious that the five stated reasons

for desertion indicate a deficiency in personal and corporate formation.

Therefore, if the Costa Rican evangelical church is to preserve the gains it has

made through evangelism, it is imperative for it to have well-formed leaders

of exemplary Christian character to serve as examples of the truth they teach.

Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA

It is within this context of growth, desertion, and ferment that

Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA seeks to fulfill its mission. In

1983, the Association of Costa Rican Bible Churches founded a Bible training

institute called the *Escuela de Estudios Pastorales* or ESEPA (School of

Pastoral Studies). In 1997, ESEPA's curriculum was redesigned with three foci

in mind—being, doing, and knowing. Syllabi and course objectives were

written to reflect, as much as possible, each one of these three focal points. As

the school's promotional literature puts it, the school's mission is "to provide

high quality and thorough preparation for pastors, leaders, and cross-cultural

workers by developing: character (being), skill (doing), and knowledge

(knowing)." ESEPA's vision and mission statement further delineates these

three foci as a way of seeking excellence.[24] With regard to character

formation, ESEPA's mission and vision statement states:

> Character: ESEPA conceives its ministry as helping to form the student's
> true Christian character as a disciple of Christ. This is comprised of
> unconditional commitment to Christ, growing in the process of being
> Christ-like, and commitment to the mission of Christ.

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[24] The following information is taken from ESEPA's unpublished official documents.

This, in turn, forms the basis of the institution's objective to form the character of its students as stated in the following way:

1. Being (values and attitudes)

    a. That the student demonstrate maturity and progress in the following areas: His/her relationship with God, with his/her family, church and community.

    b. That the student demonstrate the following characteristics: obedience, integrity, fidelity, trustworthiness, honesty, responsibility, emotional stability, love, and, in general, a good character.

ESEPA's leadership has established some very lofty objectives for the institution. At first glance the issue of character formation in theological education appears to be a simple matter. All that is needed for the student's character to be shaped is a solid academic program administered by a qualified staff and taught by competent professors. However, in the two previous projects (required by GCTS D.Min. program), other factors surfaced that impinge upon the seminary's effort to form the student's character. In a prior study (Project One) it was demonstrated that, while ESEPA's professors and staff concurred with the school's stated goal of forming the student's character, there was little or no agreement as to what the term meant, or what theory, if any, should direct their efforts. Each had a vague notion of the meaning of character formation and maintained that it was something desirable, even laudable; but when pressed, they were unable to state clearly how the institution should go about securing the goal that it had set for itself in this area. This has led to some doubtful outcomes. Not knowing what they were after, the professors and staff could claim any positive result as successful.

The second project uncovered the issue of the fragmentation of knowledge that is part and parcel of modern theological education. In 1983, Edward Farley published a major assessment of theological education in his groundbreaking work, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*.[25] Farley defines the problem of theological education as the loss of *theologia,* by which he means: "a *habitus*, a cognitive disposition and orientation of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals."[26] This knowledge was commonly regarded as sapiential rather than theoretical, as "a habit having the primary character of wisdom."[27] Farley asserts that the earliest instruction in *theologia* took the form of Christian *paideia*, the unity and goal of which was the saving knowledge of God. A major change took place in theological education when the reigning educational paradigm shifted from *theologia*, understood in terms of *paideia*, to *Wissenschaft*, with its concerns for critical-historical inquiry.

The University of Berlin was the first university to be built entirely on the *Wissenschaft* model. In order for theology to correspond to the requirements of the university, the fragmentation in theological education, which had already been divided up into four separate areas of inquiry known as the fourfold theological encyclopedia—biblical studies, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology—became more pronounced. Thus, theology was separated from praxis, and the focus of practical theology became the sociological study of a body of people known as the church. This

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[25] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
[26] Ibid., 35.
[27] Ibid.

transformation in perspective severed an essential conceptual link that opened the way to perceive academic disciplines as wholly independent fields of studies subject to their own rules of inquiry. Under such arrangements, theological education understood as sapience, along with the *habitus* required to develop character, became a secondary or tertiary concern. The change in focus was more than cosmetic; it was a substantial shift in epistemology, affecting the whole field of education. Theological studies fragmented, and the consequences can still be seen and experienced today.

In addition, under the influence of Enlightenment thinkers, especially Kant, the concept of ethics shifted to a quest to find universally applicable principles based on rational thought that had been freed from the bondage of religion and tradition. As the effects of the Enlightenment spread more widely throughout Western society, the idea gained currency that theological commitments, while personally engaging, were unnecessary or, in some cases, undesirable in order to live an authentic moral life. This change in perspective was embraced not only by philosophers and educators of the modern period but also by evangelical seminaries. Theological institutions, following the general trend to see morality as universally applicable principles, added classes on ethics to their course offerings. While it had been customary for the president of a college to teach a course on morals to graduating seniors, a kind of finishing course, the introduction of Enlightenment commitments displaced the biblical narrative for one that offered objective knowledge apart

from revelation.[28] By allowing that abstract moral principles could be derived

from an a-historical context without prior theological or philosophical

commitments, theological educators helped widen the breach between

theology and praxis, since neither had any necessary connection between

them. The unintended consequence was to make both Christian theology and

Christian morality superfluous: one could be had apart from the other, and

neither were the special province of the church or theological education.

The critique of positivism[29] need not detain us here other than to point

out that the Enlightenment model of education produced other unintended

negative consequences that have affected education in general and character

formation in particular. Parker Palmer has pointed out how the nature of

modern education, with its emphasis on objective facts, separates the knower

from the known and creates a strong hidden curriculum in which objective

facts have little to do with personal experience. Consequently, learning takes

on the character of a spectator sport in which learners see little relevance in

what is being studied, producing, at least in the classroom, passive learners.[30]

The push to discover purely objective facts standing outside the observer

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[28] As George Marsden points out, "With the emergence of the American republic it seemed almost self-evident that the goal of education should be to produce 'virtuous citizens.' Correspondingly, by the end of the century American colleges were instituting courses in moral philosophy, taught by the clergyman-president, as the capstone and integrating feature of their curricula. Rigorous theology still might be preached in required Sunday services and students might still study the Westminster Catechism at many New England and Presbyterian colleges, but moral philosophy provided a common ground for building a republic of virtue." *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 51.

[29] N. T. Wright has written extensively on this question of epistemology. See his *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), chapters 2 & 3.

[30] This, of course, reinforces the Cartesian error that reduces reality to the knowing mind and diminishes the role of embodied passions which are vital for growth in virtue. Such reification is inimical to character formation. See G. Simon Harak, *Virtuous Passions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 8-11.

"neglects the inner reality of teacher and students for the sake of a reality 'out there,' [so] the heart of the knowing self is never held up for inspection, never given a chance to be known."[31] In effect, education ceases to be a quest for truth that invites personal commitment. Rather, the goal becomes the manufacturing of a world in which truth is kept at a safe distance, allowing one to gain power over impersonal facts in order to control and manipulate them for one's purposes. Palmer asserts that instead of being understood as objectivism, education needs to be understood as communal obedience to truth in which professors and students pledge their "troth" to engage the known with their whole being, engendering "attentiveness, care, and good will."[32]

A closely related factor of the hidden curriculum resides in the institution's culture. Over a period of time institutions develop a distinct ethos—a montage of traditions, practices, values, relationships, and structures.[33] Given the fact that culture functions in a taken-for-granted manner, it becomes the unseen guest at every institutional meeting and the unrecognized determiner of daily tasks and decisions. In this manner, the culture of an institution exercises immense influence on the outcomes it seeks to achieve. When the institution's

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[31] Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harpers Collin, 1993), 35.

[32] Ibid., 31.

[33] Edgar H. Schein has explored the development and effects of institutional culture. He defines institutional culture in the following manner: "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992) p 12. The pragmatic emphasis of Schein definition should be noted. When "external adaptation and internal integration" take place without serious reflection about how they impact the stated goals of the institution, it is more than likely that the institution's developing culture will unconsciously move it away from its originating purpose.

culture is congruent with its mission, it works to advance its stated purpose in

a potent way. But when it is incongruent, it works against the institution's

stated mission in the same powerful manner. This obviously has clear

implications for theological schools and the spiritual formation of its student

body. As Banks says,

> Personal formation does not develop primarily through specific programs,
> or even through regular chapel worship; it takes place mostly as a result of
> the leavening effect of the personal example of teachers and other key
> figures (including chief administrators and student leaders), with the
> broader culture and mission of the seminary, and with the whole range of
> co-curricular groups and available activities. Curricular offerings and
> programs in personal formation have a role to play in this. But they will be
> most effective when they allow participants to engage in formative
> practices as well as learn about them.[34]

The effort to form excellent character within theological education is not the

responsibility of a few dedicated individuals who offer courses on the subject;

rather, it is a task that is given to the institution in its entirety.

The transformation from the *paideia* to the *Wissenschaft* model of

education has profoundly affected the development and subsequent culture of

theological institutions. Historically, the makeover was never a fully

completed affair. Instead, the two models were amalgamated and produced

different types of theological schools that either tended to emphasize one

model over the other or tried to balance the priorities inherent in the different

modes of education.[35] The tensions and frustrations that came about when

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[34] Robert Banks, *Re-envisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 142.

[35] David Kelsey states the problem bluntly when he writes: "For historical reasons Christian theological education…is inescapably committed to two contrasting and finally irreconcilable types or modes of what education at its best ought to be. They are normative models, models of "excellent" education….Although persuasive theological arguments can be given for adopting each of these types,

theological schools sought to incorporate an emphasis on character formation while maintaining academic excellence as defined by the Enlightenment were palpable. For, what was at work was not simply the lack of will or dedication but the struggle between two competing educational arrangements that vied for ascendancy. Without recognizing its historical roots, this tension continues to the present day and often produces a situation in which one form of education is pitted against the other. For this reason, theological education stands in need of an overarching principle that will bring coherence to its efforts.

It should not come as too great a surprise that ESEPA experiences the same dilemma and tensions. After all, the North American model of theological education was used as a road map in the development of the school. Thus, on the one hand, ESEPA seeks to form the character of its students. This is at least an echo of the *paideia* model, if not more. Yet, on the other hand, the school seeks to be academically vital, and that is measured, as it can only be, in terms of *Wissenschaft*. Additionally, it needs to be recognized that the *Wissenschaft* model of education is not an entirely foreign import. The Costa Rican governmental agency that accredits private universities, the *Consejo Nacional de Educación Superior* (CONESUP), maintains requirements that very nearly duplicate the *Wissenschaft* model of education. So the tension remains and will continue to do so as long as the leadership of ESEPA understands its mission in terms of character formation

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neither of them can be said to be somehow theologically mandated by the very nature of Christianity." *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*. [book on-line] (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993); available from http://www.religion-online.ore/cgi-bin/relsearchd.dll/showchapter?chapter_id-340, p 7 of 18; Internet; accessed 25 July 2003.

and academic vitality.[36] What the institution needs is a way to move forward, while at the same time recognizing the inherent tensions within its programs. This calls for a theory of character formation that is sufficiently comprehensive to unify the disparate factors of ESEPA's stated goals.

Besides the historical changes in education, the hidden curriculum, and institutional culture, attention needs to be paid to the preparedness of students when they enter seminary. Students arrive at seminary with personal, familial, ecclesial, and social histories that have shaped their being. Their lives and character have been significantly formed before they ever hear their first lecture or read their first assigned text. In a context where family, church, and society enjoy enough inner cohesion to form a more or less homogeneous moral culture, the role of the seminary would be to advance the knowledge and experience that students already possess. In such a situation, certain realities, such as biblical literacy, basic creedal/theological knowledge, and moral traditions reinforced by communal practices and biblical values, could be taken for granted. But this is not the case for the Costa Rican evangelical church. The students who enter ESEPA come from a wide range of ecclesiastical backgrounds, possessing diverse levels of biblical literacy and having had varied family-life experiences. The preparation that students possess differs widely; this, in turn, shapes their expectations with regard to spiritual formation.

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[36] Of course, we are not arguing that ESEPA should not maintain these two objectives, only that tensions are real and need to be taken into account when curricular and co-curricular plans are developed. If the school is going to achieve its stated goals, it must seriously seek ways to address this reality.

Brief mention needs to be made about two features of Costa Rican culture that affect the expectation that one might have about theological education. In their work, *The Ticos*, Mavis Biesanz, *et al,* have outlined the strengths and weaknesses of Costa Rican education.[37] Of particular interest to us is the cultural phenomena known as *el pobrecito* (roughly translated, "poor little thing") and *titulismo* (credentialism). The first is the perception of victimization that psychologist Pierre Thomas Claudet says arises from a paternalistic culture in which the expectation that a person who is required to take on the normal responsibilities of adult life, with all its attendant problems and risks, is "to be pitied."[38] Since the legitimate struggles that accompany a life of responsible action are perceived as unwarranted burdens, one can be excused as a *pobrecito* when one fails to be conscientious about personal duties. When applied to education, *el pobrecito* "fosters a reluctance to work and study hard."[39] Indeed, not only is there the expectation that teachers should not demand excellence from their students and to accept mediocre work, but they should also reward slipshod efforts with good grades.

Educational expectations of Costa Ricans are not only formed by *el pobrecito* but also by *titulismo*, the desire to obtain academic credentials for social advancement. The quality of an institution's program and the academic

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[37] Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, Richard Biesanz, Karen Zubris Biesanz, *The Ticos: Culture and Social Change in Costa Rica* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1999), chap. 9.

[38] According to Biesanz, "Whether the person is sick, pregnant, hung over, suffering unrequited love, tired, working at a job, studying…or because this person must study, work, get up early, walk, cook, take an exam, do a task; or because he or she got a bad grade, was punished, was scolded…Not only is the person a *pobrecito* but also *salado* [unlucky] because he didn't get away with ignoring the rules: he is caught copying, fined for driving drunk, got the current cut off for not paying the electric bill, arrived late, overslept, lost a job, had to do extra work." Ibid., 9-10.

[39] Ibid., 212.

preparation of professors are less important than the title that it confers. In the late forties and throughout the decade of the fifties, the modern Costa Rican educational system was developed to provide skilled workers to meet the needs of an increasingly industrial society. Prior to this period, only the social elite enjoyed the privilege of an education. At that time, the goal of education was to develop "cultured" citizens, who, because of their social position, did not participate in manual labor. Modern education has made it possible for the lower class Costa Rican citizen to rise in social status and share many of the privileges that were once enjoyed only by the upper class. Unfortunately, the rise in status has bred similar attitudes toward manual labor held by the social elite. Thus, according to Biesanz, "the stigma of manual labor remains so strong that even when other options are open, most prefer the academic track, not necessarily because they want to be *cultos* [cultured] but because they want the prestige of white-collar jobs and professional titles."[40] In addition to the social prestige, legal minimum wages are determined by one's academic credentials and not solely by one's position of employment. This holds true even for jobs that are normally considered to be unskilled labor, as, increasingly, employers require a high school diploma as a minimum qualification for employment. As a result, there is great pressure to acquire diplomas and professional titles, even if it means cheating on exams and homework.

Clearly, Costa Rican students are not the only ones to plead for special consideration when handing in poor quality work. Occasionally, the spirit of *el*

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[40] Ibid., 214.

pobrecito falls upon even the most conscientious students. Neither can it be claimed that they are the only students in the world who look pragmatically upon education as a necessary means to cultural uplift. If, however, Biesanz, *et al*, are correct in their analysis, these two features of Costa Rican culture work decidedly against ESEPA's efforts to form godly character. For, on the one hand, an undue tolerance of the attitude of *el pobrecito* will breed mediocrity and stifle all efforts to move students toward Christ-like maturity. To excuse students from legitimate struggles and difficulties that often attend the process of education in general, and character formation in particular, is to court failure. Likewise, to allow theological education to be thought of as a stepping-stone to honor, prestige, and an affluent lifestyle strikes at the very heart of Christian character. Purity of motives and humility of heart cannot easily coexist with an inflated *curriculum vitae* that claims legitimate achievements that are, in fact, illegitimately gained. These cultural realities impact the effort to shape the student's character, and they must be taken into account by the faculty and staff when developing a philosophy or program of character formation. Obviously, what is needed is an overarching theory to guide the seminary in its endeavors to form the character of its students. The theory must be sufficiently comprehensive to take into consideration the unique history and ethos of theological education and the distinctive peculiarities of the Latin American culture. At the same time, it must provide a cognitive road map that leads the institution toward practical application. We believe that virtue ethics offers such a theory.

Prior Studies

Sensing the need to give greater attention to the character formation of theological students in *Seminario Nazareno de las Americas* in San Jose, Costa Rica, Mary Lou Riggle completed a study entitled *Spiritual Formation: Implications for Theological Education* in 1989.[41] The study was structured around a "Spiritual Formation Inventory" that was completed by representatives from the student body. The inventory focused upon the perceived spiritual strengths and needs of the students as measured by their satisfaction with the amount of time spent reading the bible, in prayer, and, in keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, progress toward perfection and detachment from the world. The results of the inventory were tabulated and used as a basis for curriculum design in the seminary. Missing from Riggle's study is any consideration of the history of theological education, particularly the distinction between *paideia* and *Wissenschaf* models of education. While Riggle outlines a brief biblical foundation for theological education based on three concepts of relationship, transformation, and incarnation, there is a complete lack of any serious theory and/or historical models of spiritual/character formation. What is more, by using a pre-designed inventory, Riggle imposed categories on the study that left aside the aspect of the students' perceptions and experiences of the educational process. No questions on the inventory are directed toward the expectations that the students brought with them when they entered the school and how those

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[41] Mary Lou Riggle, *Spiritual Formation: Implications for Theological Education A Case Study: Seminario Nazareno de Las Américas, San* José*, Costa Rica*, D.Min Dissertation for Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, 1989.

perceptions and attitudes may have changed during the time of their studies. Nor is there any reflection on how students' attitudes and perceptions may have hindered or advanced the seminary's mission to form the students' character.

<div align="center">Virtue Ethics</div>

It is our contention that virtue ethics provides a way to contemplate the function of character formation within theological education that responds well to the challenges that have been sketched above. Since we will give a fuller explication of virtue ethic in the literature review, here we paint with broad strokes a description of its main points.

Virtue ethics is teleological in nature and encompasses several inseparable and tightly interrelated features: narrative, community, practices, and virtues. Character ethicists insist that our character is shaped when we see ourselves, our lives, and our loyalties as part of a larger history or drama that is moving toward a determinate *telos* or end. Our character is not developed in isolation from others, but rather it is formed in relation to others in community. That is to say that it is formed within a particular moral culture. Moreover, the drama that gives meaning to the community finds concrete expression in communal practices that develop virtue and are sustained by them. As a model of character development, virtue ethics pulls together the diverse aspects of the Christian life to which a Christian leader is personally committed and over which a Christian leader exercises communal responsibility. It provides a way to reflect more fully on the life and character of a Christian leader in the

context of those commitments that arise from a specifically theological, biblical, and ecclesiastical heritage.

Statement of Research Problem

The purpose of this study was to test the value of virtue ethics as a theory of character formation among the student body of *Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA* in San José, Costa Rica. This was an exploratory study that focused on students' knowledge, attitudes and expectations regarding the institution's intent to form their character. The study was designed around a semester-long course entitled *The Formation of Godly Character*. The course was developed with the thought in mind that it would serve a pilot project that could be used in other seminaries, and which, it was hoped, would become a catalyst for further study. Data was gathered primarily through a survey devised to elicit the students' understanding of character formation and to draw out their expectations in regard to character formation as an integral part their theological studies. Six months after the course was completed the same survey was administered in order to measure any substantive changes in the students' attitudes and expectations. Data was also gathered by the use of a data log in which were recorded critical reflections as to the viability of the learning activities selected for the class. The usefulness of this study resided in the insight it provided into the students' perceptions of theological education as an agent of character formation. It also provided an opportunity to measure the impact that a course designed specifically to address the issue of character formation had in shaping students' conceptions of theological

education. In addition, the project allowed us to assess the practicability of teaching virtue ethics as a paradigm for character formation within theological education.

As has already been noted, the problem inherent in theological education is the loss of *theologia* or "*habitus*, a cognitive disposition and orientation of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals,"[42] and the incompatible goals between *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* which results in the fragmentation of knowledge that separates theology from practice. Since ESEPA is committed to both excellent forms of education, there was a need to deal forthrightly with the innate tensions that arise from this arrangement and to seek a way to close the gap between theology and practice in order to make character formation an integral element of the educational process. This project sought to introduce the theory of virtue ethics in the belief that the theory provided a needed frame of reference by which to understand and reflect on character formation. It was believed that it would serve to bring together theology and practice, thus ameliorating some of the effects of the fragmentation of knowledge inherent in modern theological education.

In addition to meet the needs stated above, it was believed that virtue ethics would provide conceptual and linguistic categories needed to invite further exploration and discussion among ESEPA's faculty and staff. As has already been commented, in a prior study (Project One) it was shown that ESEPA's professors and staff had a vague understanding of character

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[42] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, 35.

formation, and they were uncertain as to how the seminary's goals in this area should be carried out. Thus, instead of a well thought-out effort giving direction to a united front, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." In a follow-up study (Project Two) using the *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* models of education as a grid, interviews were conducted with the founders of the seminary in order to determine what principles or theory guided them in the development of the school's program and how they saw the program fulfilling the goal of character formation. Through that study it became evident that little thought had been given to a comprehensive theory or strategy with regard to character formation. In the opinion of the founders, the curricular program as it stood was sufficient to achieve the desired goal, yet the program was based on the pattern of the fourfold divisions found in *Wissenschaft*. There was no recognition of the inherent fragmentation of this system and what effects it might have on character formation. Besides giving a common language and a mutual focus to ESEPA's effort to form character, it was also believed that the theory of virtue ethics would help students to appreciate character formation as a fundamental aspect of the educational task. It was also believed that a theoretically clear conception of character formation would assist in eliciting the students' active and willing commitment to the necessary practices needed to form character.

As has been noted before, in meeting the challenges involved in character formation, all facets of the institution's life and culture play a significant part. Since it was not possible to investigate every potential factor, and since the two prior projects concentrated on other major themes, the scope of this study

was limited to an exploration of students' knowledge, attitudes and expectations regarding character formation. In order to spell out to the students the challenges of character formation within theological education and to provide an understanding of character formation, the course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, briefly surveyed the historical differences between *paideia* and *Wissenschaft* and covered at great length the subject of virtue ethics. It was hoped that the course would provide students with a way to evaluate their attitudes and expectations in light of the historical evolution of theological education, as well as by presenting a cognitive road map to guide them in the development of their character.

Since by definition character is formed over a long period of time through the development of habits, disposition, and tendencies to behave in a consistent manner in comparable situations, it could not be hoped that one class given over a period of one semester would result in students whose character had been perfectly formed. Rather, what could be legitimately sought through such a class is the following:

1. The students would gain an awareness of the historical roots of theological education with its inherent strengths and weaknesses. It was hoped that by presenting these realities to the students we could, in effect, begin to co-opt the effects of *Wissenschaft*.

2. The students would have a growing self-awareness of their need for character formation (this in light of his personal history, cultural particularities, and biblical and theological commitments).

3. Students would understand how character is formed, especially, the interface between narrative, community, practices, and virtues.

4. Students would commit themselves to a plan of action during their seminary years that actively seeks growth in character. This plan of action would ideally include a commitment to the various disciplines and practices that form a godly character.

Virtue ethics underscores the fact that our moral self is shaped through habituation in the course of our daily duties, the many decisions we make, and in the numerous interactions we have with other people. This being the case, many, if not all, aspects of theological education become an arena of character formation. Curriculum, student-professor relationships, friendships among students, the institutional culture, the way a student handles his personal responsibility to learn, and the pressures and discipline of academic study all play a significant part in character formation, as do the major spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, study, solitude, and service. Virtue ethics takes all of these seemingly disparate aspects and places them in the bigger picture of the *telos* of our lives as defined by the biblical narrative. While a class on character formation can further one's understanding of character, and perhaps even strengthen character, without this larger perspective it only contributes to the fragmentation that already exists within theological education.

In order to engage students in active reflection, in which they would examine their attitudes and expectations in light of the various aspects of virtue ethics, the class required them to explore their life story through

keeping a journal, reflecting on readings through written assignments, and completing a self-assessment to help them evaluate their goals for their time of study in ESEPA. The aim of this course was not only to measure students' expectations, but also to strengthen curriculum design and co-curricular activities of the seminary. In this way it was hoped that the course would serve as a pilot project that would to provide a model to guide other theological institutions in their efforts to form the character of their students. A review of the literature pertaining to modern leadership revealed that the character of a leader is of paramount importance to the culture and outcomes of any organization. The same literature, however, did not offer an adequate theory of character formation that embraces the wide spectrum of issues related to the goals and priorities of theological education.

We conducted a qualitative study that sought to measure the congruence and dissonance of students' attitudes and expectations with regard to ESEPA's goals to form of their character. To facilitate this assessment, a course was taught with the overarching objective to inform the students of ESEPA's goals to form their character and to orient them to the means and processes of character formation within theological education. In order to measure attitudes and expectations, a survey was conducted at the beginning of the course, and six months after the course had ended the same survey was administered by email in order to discover any substantive changes of attitudes, expectations, perspectives, and practices.

The choice of a survey over an interview with students resided in a cultural phenomenon known as *quedar bien*, which roughly translated means "to save

face."[43] When interacting with an authority figure, such as a professor, Costa Ricans tend to say only what they think the professor wants to hear, not what is necessarily true. For a Costa Rican to speak in blunt terms that might possibly elicit disapproval is to break social convention which carries the threat of losing face. The obvious implication was that a professor should not conduct a personal interview with students for purposes of research, since to do so would place students in a position where they would feel obligated to color their comments in a manner that would please the professor. The investigation would thereby be distorted from beginning. A survey, on the other hand, placed some distance between the professor and the student, especially the six-month follow-up administered by email.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions, attitudes and expectations do theological students have with regard to character formation during their time of formal study in *La Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA* in San José, Costa Rica?

2. What does scripture teach about a Christian leader's character and the concomitant virtues that he or she is to possess?

3. What pedagogical approach would best support the teaching of virtue ethics?

4. From the biblical teaching, what communal practices are needed to form virtue within the academic institution?

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[43] See Biesanz, et al, *The Ticos,* pp. 9 and 76.

Research Methods

This project will undertake various phases:

1. A qualitative study was carried out to measure the coherence and
   dissonance of the students' perspectives regarding character formation
   during their time of study. The research was gathered by the use of a
   survey that consisted of twelve questions, four of which are designed to
   canvass the same concepts from different angles in order to bring out the
   students' coherence or dissonance with regard to their expectations. The
   remaining questions were of a general nature, but they served only to
   make the survey appear more extensive than it was. Each student's survey
   was evaluated individually, measuring the consistency of their answers.
   After each survey had been evaluated, all were assessed to ascertain
   common and divergence attitudes. The six month study followed the same
   procedure of evaluation. After the surveys were evaluated, the results of
   both were compared in order to assess any substantive changes within
   individual students and the group as a whole. When this phase was
   completed, the data was interpreted along the lines of comparative
   analysis, since the focus of the study was on students' change in perception
   and viewpoint with regard to their understanding of the role of theological
   education in shaping their character.

2. A fifteen week course entitled *The Formation of Godly Leaders* was
   offered, totaling forty-five hours of instruction, in which the theory of
   virtue ethics with its focus on *telos*, narrative, community, virtues, and
   practices was explained and applied to theological education and specific

leadership issues. The course paid particular attention to the nature of narrative, especially the interface between biblical, cultural, and personal narratives. This allowed for the exploration of personal histories, issues of character formation, personal identity, and cultural roles that were discussed in light of biblical theology. In this way, the theory of virtue ethics was be anchored securely to ESEPA's evangelical commitment to Scriptures.

3. While the class was theoretical in scope, it sought to be practical in application. In order to explore how personal narrative is taken up and understood by an overarching narrative, the students were asked to write out their life story focusing upon how the gospel has shaped their personal narrative and their call to the ministry. They also were assigned to keep a journal during the semester (journal exercises are based on Richard Peace's book, *Spiritual Journaling*[44]). Reading assignments included Dallas Willard's book, *Renueva tu Corazón: Sé Como Cristo* (*Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ)*,[45] and Oswald Sander's classic, *Liderazgo Espiritual* (*Spiritual Leadership*).[46] The students were required to write a book review based on the *4Mat* form that summarizes the content of the book and chooses one theme from the book that helped them in some particular way.[47]   Each class consisted of one three hour

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[44] Richard Peace, *Spiritual Journaling* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavePress, 1998).

[45] Dallas Willard, *Renueva tu Corazón: Sé Como Cristo* (Madrid: Editorial CLIE, 2000).

[46] J. Oswald Sanders. *Liderazgo Espiritual* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Editorial Portavoz, 1995).

[47] See Bernice McCarthy, *The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques* (Barrington, Ill.: EXECEL, inc., 1987).

session. The first hour and forty-five minutes were dedicated to lectures and multimedia presentations. In order to experience the formative power of community, the last hour of the class consisted of small group interaction in which the students shared their personal narratives with their classmates and interacted with questions based on the lectures. The goal of this exercise was to help the students to see how their personal and communal narrative has been taken up into the biblical narrative in God's redeeming engagement with the world.

4. A data log was maintained in which observations and impressions were recorded in order to reflect on the effectiveness of the course.

Nomenclature

Since the presupposition of seminary education is the training of pastoral leaders, no distinction was made between traditional church leaders, such as pastor, elder, or the title Christian leader, used in a more generic fashion. In like manner, no distinction was made between theological education and other forms of training directed to the development of Christian leaders. No difference was assigned to the words morality, understood as the living out of one's beliefs, and ethics, understood as the study that investigates why certain actions are either immoral or praiseworthy. Since the two words come into English from Latin and Greek, respectively, sharing almost exact meaning, the distinction is too arbitrary. Last, the expressions character formation and spiritual formation were employed as synonyms, since in a Christian context the two idioms represent the same reality.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The idea for this thesis was generated from Gordon-Conwell's doctorate of ministry program, Christian Leadership, developed by Dr. Wayne Goodwin. The nucleus of the program revolves around four foci: calling, character, community, and competencies. Each aspect of the program, like the strands of a rope, can be separated and analyzed, but apart from the whole no single feature functions with any independent significance; each is tightly intertwined with the others, making a single entity. Nevertheless, it is possible, and necessary, to study each strand separately and investigate other indispensable sub-themes that contribute to a robust understanding of the whole. This study is an investigation in the second element of the program—Christian character—its importance, significance, and formation. Broadly, the context of the study is theological education, the goal of which is the formation of Christian leaders. Specifically, the context is the *Universidad Cristiana Internacional ESEPA* in San José, Costa Rica.

In this chapter we canvass the important literature that has contributed to this project. In order the avoid misunderstanding, we first define character to clear away some of the clutter that all too often surrounds the subject. This includes an exploration of some of the essential elements of character. The definition of character is followed by an exposition of the fundamental elements of virtue ethics: teleology, narrative, community, practices, and virtues. In this discussion, an effort is made to outline the

significance of each constituent part of virtue ethics for the formation of character within the context of theological education.

A Definition of Character and Preliminary Considerations

As we saw in the previous chapter, recent leadership literature has voiced a concern for leaders to be men and women of good character. It should go without saying that good Christian leadership resides in the integrity and character of the leader. On the surface, this is an obvious affirmation. It does, however, beg for several clarifying questions: What is character? What inherent features encompass the concept of character? How is it formed? In keeping with the idea of theological education, what advantages or limitations inhere in an institutional milieu that might promote or discourage character formation? In reference to the concept of leadership, the question needs to be asked: what qualities does a leader need to possess in order to be recognized as person of sterling character? What is more, in light of our Christian commitments, what character qualities should mark the life and ministry of a Christian leader, and what difference might these qualities make when compared to leaders who do not hold the same commitments?

In English, the meaning of the word 'character' is quite fluid. Webster's dictionary contains seventeen uses of the word.[1] Etymologically it comes from the Greek language meaning a sign, mark, or engraving, something etched by a sharp instrument. Thus, it carries the idea of permanence as opposed to the ephemeral. When applied to persons or things, it means the trait(s) or

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[1] Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, 2nd ed. unabridged (Springfield, Mass.: G & C Merriam Company, 1953), s.v. "character."

attribute(s) which serve as an index to their essential nature. It can also mean

the sum of moral or mental qualities that distinguish an individual or group

from others. From this usage, it comes to mean developed moral qualities,

excellence, or vigor acquired through habituation. When used without a

qualifying adjective the connotation is positive; when speaking of negative

features of a person or thing the word must be qualified. In addition, the idea

of traits allows the word to be used in theatrical works and novels as

portrayals of persons or personalities. Such are some of the many meanings of

the word.

Pulling together the threads from the above definition, we can define

character as the compilation of enduring traits, attributes, and dispositions

that make us uniquely what we are. Character encompasses our entire being—

body, mind, and emotions. It is what we are in the deepest recesses of our

being, from which proceed our thoughts, decisions, emotions, and behaviors.

Our character is revealed not by occasional acts or by our intentions, whether

good or bad; but rather, it is known over a period of time and in different

social contexts by the consistency of our behavior, the quality of our

relationships, and our attitudes and inclinations. Character is dynamic, not

static; what we are becoming is as important as what we are. Accordingly,

whether for good or ill, our character is always in the process of being formed.

Understood in this way, "character is distinct from such concepts as

personality, image, reputation, or celebrity,"[2] which are projections of we

want others to see in us and not, in fact, qualities of enduring substance.

In his work, *The Death of Character*, [3] James Davison Hunter underscores

three important features of character: *moral discipline, moral attachment,*

and moral autonomy. These three aspects are inseparable properties that

constitute character and sustain our commitment to live within the

boundaries of a community of moral discourse. Hunter's definition is

comprehensive and deserves to be quoted in full.

> The most basic element of character is *moral discipline*. Its most essential
> feature is the inner capacity for restraint—an ability to inhibit oneself in
> one's passions, desires, and habits within the boundaries of a moral order.
> Moral discipline, in many respects, is the capacity to say "no"; its function,
> to inhibit and constrain personal appetites on behalf of a greater good.
> This idea of a greater good points to a second element, *moral attachment*.
> Character, in short, is defined not just negatively but positively as well. It
> reflects the affirmation of our commitments to a larger community, the
> embrace of an ideal that attracts us, draws us, animates us, and inspires
> us. Affirmation and interdiction, the "yes" and the "no"… are merely two
> aspects of the same single reality. In the latter instance, it is an affirmation
> of commitments we have to the larger community. Finally, character
> implies the *moral autonomy* of the individual in his or her capacity to
> freely make ethical decisions. The reason, very simply, is that controlled
> behavior cannot be moral behavior for it removes the element of discretion
> and judgment. Thus, character enacts moral judgment and does so freely.
>
> Character, then, is defined by the coming together of these moral
> properties. It is a reflection of creeds that have become convictions and is
> manifested in choices to abide by those convictions even in, *especially in*,
> the face of temptation or adversity. Character is, in explicit ways, the
> embodiment of the ideals of a moral order—it is formed in relation to the
> imperatives of that moral order that are embedded in the life of a
> community of moral discourse.[4]

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[2] Os Guinness, *When No Ones Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2000), 15.

[3] James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[4] Ibid., 16. The author's emphasis.

Hunter's comprehensive definition gives helpful insight into the subject of our investigation. Character formation requires moral discipline that limits certain activities and attitudes. We freely consent to these limitations because we are inspirited by the ideals embedded within our community of moral discourse. While legalism or social coercion may bring about conformity, they always fail to produce excellent character.

Hunter expands upon his definition by pointing out that these properties of character are deeply rooted in the ideals of Western Civilization, especially with regard to the education of leaders. While the proclivities of modern ethics have shifted to individual choice, freed from the restraints of community and tradition, "character, in a classic sense, manifests itself as the autonomy to make ethical decisions always on behalf of the common good and the discipline to abide by that principle."[5] The willingness to live this way does not issue from an angst-ridden compliance to legalistic rules but from freely chosen obedience to a transcendent vision that lays claim to our loyalty. The reason for this, according to Hunter, is the "sacred quality" that the transcendent vision assumes: "Character is formed through the slow reception of 'god-terms' within us…that exist as 'presiding presences.'"[6] As the authority of these "god-terms" is internalized, it profoundly shapes our identity by becoming an abiding influence over our will and emotions. It is possible, of course, to disobey this authority, but to do so is to act contrary to our fundamental commitments that would eat at the fabric of our life. Indeed,

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[5] Ibid., 17.
[6] Ibid.

the compelling power to obey internalized truth is seen in a willingness to choose death rather than to go against conscience. Martin Luther's defiance of his interrogators at the Diet of Worms stands as an excellent example of creed become conviction. When commanded to renounce his teachings and writings, he replied, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason…my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."[7] Clearly, character is not easily attained, nor will people of good character subordinate moral principle for the sake of avoiding conflict or gaining utilitarian ends.

While Hunter's definition delineates the basic properties that comprise character, it does not define the substance of character. We may illustrate the need to distinguish between the properties and substance of character in the following manner. Conceptually, the properties of character apply equally to the likes of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and members of the Ku Klux Klan. Both could speak of a creed that had become conviction; both were imbued by the ideals and participated in a community of moral discourse; both acted in accordance with those ideals for what they perceived to be the common good; both King and the Klansmen displayed the courage to sacrifice their lives for the convictions they held. But no one should conclude by this comparison that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the members of the Ku Klux Klan were moral equals. When seen in light of the content of what they envisioned, their motives, means, and the outcomes of their actions, the comparison clearly

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[7] Quoted in Hunter, *Death of Character*, 18.

becomes a contrast between polar opposites. King's life and legacy is one of peace and reconciliation while the Klansman's is one of violence and hatred. Notwithstanding these fundamental differences, it is possible to say that both King and the Klansmen were people of "integrity," if integrity is understood to mean a commitment to live by one's ideals and values.

We use this extreme comparison only to indicate that all ethical systems need a qualifying adjective such as secular, Buddhist, Muslim, New Age, or Christian.[8] The Enlightenment project to discover a universal ethic based on rationalism and freed from the constraints of prior commitments to community, tradition, and religion is illusory. Important ethical terms like benevolence, justice, and freedom are abstract nouns; they are made intelligible only when placed within a specific social-historical context that serves to give them their meaning. Hunter refers to this phenomenon as the "particularity of moral culture."[9] That is, even though the properties that make up character may be understood in abstract terms, they do not exist apart from specific ideals that are embedded within the social-historical life of real people. The convictions, values, and imperatives that describe life as it is or ought to be are comprehensible only when seen in the light of their specific content. Here is one of the problems that confronts a moral education that purports to be value-free: when abstract moral terms lack particularity, their meaning is open to any interpretation, and their power to shape character, as has been described, is negligible.

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[8] This is a theme is explored by Stanley Hauerwas's work, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), chap. 1.
[9] Ibid., 20.

Moral particularity is plainly seen in the different ideals embraced by diverse cultures. For instance, Plato's ideal society, led by virtuous leaders, focused on his concept of justice that needed the virtues of wisdom, self-control, and courage in order to be fully functional. Aristocratic leaders who possessed the virtue of justice would be more inclined to rule the *polis*, the Greek city-state, for the sake of the common good. The biblical story, on the other hand, places the subject of character in the context of the holiness and goodness of God that he manifested when he entered into a covenant with the children of Israel and gave them the Ten Commandments. The quest for the common good within the Hebrew society was not confined to the virtuous actions of the ruling class, as in a Greek city-state, but was expected of all Israel's citizens as an expression of their covenant loyalty to Yahweh and his people. This contrast between Greek and Hebrew thought brings into sharp relief how particular cultures influence the way we understand moral life. Moral culture, with all its particularity, provides explanations for a virtuous life and an apologia for behaving one way over another. It provides the criteria by which to judge ourselves as wise or foolish, good or evil. Morality cannot be reduced to universal principles divorced of specific content without becoming nebulous and ineffective. The properties of character may be summarized in the way Hunter has done, but the outcomes envisioned are determined by their specific content.

While participation in a given moral culture exercises authority over our life in a very conscious fashion, the power of a moral culture to shape

character consists especially in the unconscious influence that it exercises over our lives. As Hunter explains,

> The power of culture is always measured by its power to bind us, to compel us, to oblige us in ways we are not fully aware of. In this, particular moral cultures define the horizons of our moral imagination in ways that we are not fully conscious. They set out the possibilities that we can envision in specific circumstances.... Moral culture, then, becomes authoritative in social life and binding on individual conscience only in the particularity of moral traditions and the communities that embody them.[10]

Thus, the aims of character formation move beyond the observation of external rules to an internal integration of a moral culture that shapes the taken-for-granted aspects of life. Consequently, integrated moral culture possesses great power by unconsciously guiding our decisions and activities. In what follows, we will have much more to say about how moral culture and community powerfully influence our perception of good and evil, and how they shape our character. Here, however, we need to observe that Hunter's extended definition of character helps shed light on some of the complexities of character formation that should enable us to avoid at least three pitfalls: 1) a facile moralism that reduces morality to simplistic aphorisms, 2) a soul-killing legalism that relies on coercive obedience with little attention being given to the inspiration of "moral attachment," and 3) an antinomian or nihilistic spirit that rejects the call to serious moral engagement. Each one of these pitfalls works against character formation either by truncating its meaning or by dismissing it out of hand.

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[10] Ibid., 22-23.

Hunter's definition of character reveals some of challenges that confront educational institutions. Clearly, if theological educators are keen to form the character of their students, theology (creed) become conviction will be central to their efforts in order to generate both moral discipline and moral attachment. Therefore, biblical studies, systematic theology, and church history must be more than a collation of engaging information—something studied with great historical acumen that then remains uncoupled from compelling moral engagement. Hunter's definition should discipline the penchant of educational institutions to rely on programs that are abstracted from moral particularity.[11] Christian character formation is not technique; it is, rather, the acquisition of "the grammar of faith"[12] learned within a particular community of moral discourse. In short, theology must be the basis of the institution's moral culture, defining the content of its vision and its organizational ethos. In this way, students will be helped along the way in the development of a set of expectations (both explicit and implicit) that will guide them toward the formation of godly character. Or, to paraphrase Hunter, theology must "define the horizons of [the students'] moral

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[11] Hunter has pointed out the pervasive subjectivism in values clarification whose proponents believe "that *moral reality is, finally, a subjective reality*; that *moral authority is, finally, a subjective authority*; that *moral norms are the aggregate of rudimentary subjective sensibilities*. Unencumbered by prior obligations, commitments, and relationships, the person is capable of creating, out of no other resources than his or her mind and emotions, the moral ends and moral justification to which he or she is committed." *Death of Character*, 190. The emphasis is the author's. If values clarification is to be used within the context of theological education, it needs to be re-envisioned within the school's basic theological commitments. It might be a very useful tool in helping students reflect on the disparity between their actual behavior and attitudes as compared to the values that arise from scripture. If, however, values clarification is understood as the quest of an autonomous individual to live an authentic life, freed from all moral particularity, its utility is quite dubious, since it would widen the already existent gap between theology and praxis.

[12] For this idea we are indebted to Paul Homer's work, *The Grammar of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

imagination in ways that [they] are not fully conscious." This calls for a commitment to character formation that is extensive in its scope, touching all aspects of theological education and involving all who participate in the institution— professors, students and administrative personnel.

Of course, all of this may prove to be more easily said than done. As Hunter's definition makes clear, the formation of character is a complex matter; it is made more difficult by the fact that the concept has fallen into disuse within Western society. Historically, character was a much discussed and celebrated subject. Early Western philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and later the Stoics emphasized the importance of a leader's character for the well-being of society. Christian writers also embraced some aspects of their teachings. Augustine, for example, reinterpreted the four cardinal virtues in light of the love of God.[13] Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* contains an extended exposition on the subject of character, which he based on writings of Aristotle.[14] We are not, of course, arguing that it is necessary to embrace Greek philosophy. Our concern is that the concept of character formation as described above has little currency in the common stock of ideas about contemporary education in general and in theological education in particular. This certainly influences the expectations that students bring to their studies. Without cultural reinforcement, it is most probable that students entering the study of theology will hold various expectations, if any, with regard to formation of their character.

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[13] Philip Schaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), "On the Morals of the Catholic Church," 15.
[14] Note particularly questions 22 to 70.

Notwithstanding the lack of cultural underpinnings to support the concept of character formation, there are encouraging signs of a renewed interest in virtue ethics. To this subject we now turn.

Virtue Ethics

In recent years, the moral state of American society has initiated a renewed interest in the study of virtue and character formation both in secular and religious fields of study.[15] The author whose writings have advanced the recent discussion on virtue is Alasdair MacIntyre. In his work, *After Virtue,*[16] he makes a compelling case for the ascendancy of virtue ethics within modern moral discourse which has set off a debate about appropriateness of reaching back into the history of the West in order to conduct modern ethical inquiry. His work is a high watermark in the field of study that has obliged subsequent authors to interact with his ideas. He argues that contemporary ethical reasoning has been stripped of it historical distinctiveness, leaving nothing more than the shards of former philosophical systems. While the concepts and vocabulary that these systems employed continue to be bandied about, their meaning has changed significantly, since they "were originally at home in larger totalities of theory and practice in

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[15] From the secular side there is William J. Bennet, *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993); Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community* (New York: Crown, 1993); Betty Sichel, *Moral Education: Character, Community, and Ideals* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); James Q. Wilson, *On Character* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1991); From the religious side there is Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology;* Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics; Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World and Living In Between* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1988); Joseph J. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996); Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992); Gilbert C. Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[16] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd Ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

which they enjoyed a role and function supplied by contexts of which they have now been deprived." [17] This means that the edifice of modern moral discourse has had the foundation pulled out from underneath it. In effect, contemporary disagreements over many important ethical issues have no substantive resolution. Even when the arguments are logically sound, proponents on either side of the issue employ arguments based on contradictory premises to make their case. Thus, no convincing proof can be offered to embrace one viewpoint over another. MacIntyre terms this phenomenon as "conceptual incommensurability"[18] in which rational moral discourse dissolves into an exercise in futility.

According to MacIntyre, in the absence of moral particularity, to use Hunter's phrase, character and virtue have given way to "emotivism" as the unquestioned prism through which all moral understanding is refracted. He defines emotivism as "the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments *are nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character."[19] These moral "preferences" are sharply distinguished from "facts." Facts are true or false; moral assertions are personal predilections, neither true nor false. As a consequence, moral points of view that ignite disagreements often degenerate into a contest of will, since morality is based on an appeal to the passions. As a philosophy and a practice, emotivism has found a welcome home in a wide variety of systems of thought that, while not

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[17] MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 10.
[18] Ibid., 8.
[19] Ibid., 11-12, emphasis the author's.

claiming to be emotivism, reduce moral discourse to personal preferences. Emotivism's unacknowledged ubiquity throughout modern culture has given it great influence to shape individual self-understanding and the social institutions that envelop modern life.[20] What is more, where ethics is reduced to personal preference, the idea of character formation is irrelevant. The very concept of formation carries within it some ideal or standard by which to measure the quality of that which is being formed. Not so with emotivism. All that is needed is to choose the values that at present are emotionally satisfying. Theoretically, if the values chosen today become displeasing tomorrow, there is no need for alarm, since an individual can always choose another set of values that are more in line with his subjective tastes.

MacIntyre clarifies with great skill how all moral philosophies, including emotivism, presuppose a social-historical context and content that are expressed and embodied in what he calls "characters." Characters personify moral beliefs, doctrines, and theories; they provide the members of a society with role models of culturally significant moral ideals that legitimate certain approaches to social reality. Two of the character types that MacIntyre puts forward as examples of modern culture are the Manager and the Therapist.[21] The Manager represents the rational bureaucrat of modern governments and corporations. He is a master of organizational technique whose role is to administer scarce resources as efficiently and effectively as

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[20] As MacIntyre points out, "The unrecognized philosophical power of emotivism is one clue to its cultural power." Ibid., 20.
[21]The other character is the Rich Aesthete, "whose interest is to fend off the kind of boredom that is so characteristic of modern leisure by contriving behavior in others that will be responsive to their wishes, that will feed their sated appetites." Ibid., 24.

possible in order to achieve predetermined ends. The idea of ends, however, presupposes values, but since values are non-rational, they fall outside the purview of the manager's function within modern society. Therefore, the manager's success is measured only in pragmatic terms without reference to wider social considerations. In a similar fashion, the Therapist is also concerned with techniques, efficiency, and effectiveness. Unlike the Manager, however, his acquisition of technique is used for the healing of neurosis and social maladjustment. But like the Manager, the Therapist is incapable of moral judgment, at least professionally, since it is only a matter of personal preference. According to MacIntyre, these characters share the emotivist's view of the distinction between rational and non-rational discourse, even though they embody this distinction in very different social spheres. Both enjoy social significance by their claim to an objectivity that separates trans-historical fact from personal values and prejudice. What gives them plausibility within society is a historical narrative that shapes a particular perception of reality. The outcome of reducing morality to emotivism is that the modern self has become an abstraction which possesses limited criteria for moral judgments, since the self is "totally detached from all social particularity"[22] and has lost the *telos* by which it can be evaluated.

In order to demonstrate his thesis, MacIntyre surveys the history of modern philosophy, especially the Enlightenment, explaining why modern thought has led to the moral cul-de-sac of emotivism. His investigation into the historical development of morality need not detain us here. It will become

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[22] Ibid., 32.

increasingly clear how his response to this feature of modernity has become the basis for a renewed call for an ethic of virtue. What is significant for us is how the two characters mentioned above have come to serve as the ideals for the development of Christian leadership. In many quarters, managerial savvy and therapeutic expertise is held out as primary abilities for successful pastoral leadership within contemporary society.[23] If MacIntyre is correct in his assessment, it follows that when theological institutions seek relevance in the present social-historical context without significant theological reflection, it is possible to accept unwittingly the division between facts and values. This would, for all intents and purposes, make technique and efficiency the prominent features of their academic programs that would assign ethical considerations to personal preference. In effect, character formation would be altogether laid aside or relegated to courses on discipleship or professional ethics. While these courses can be of great value, such a posture contributes to the fragmentation of which Farley has complained. What is needed is a way to envisage the purpose of theological education within a matrix that integrates academic learning with character formation. We believe that virtue ethics provides such a matrix with its emphasis on teleology, narrative, community, practice, and virtue.

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[23] Hauerwas and Willimon complain that "the seminaries have produced clergy who are agents of modernity, experts in the art of congregational adaptation to the cultural status quo, enlightened facilitators whose years of education have trained them to enable believers to detach themselves from the insights, habits, stories, and structures that make the church the church." *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) 116. Of course, this may be an overstatement, but it does point to certain tendencies within modern theological education to find its relevance more from the surrounding culture than the resources of historical theology, biblical studies, and church history.

Teleology

The very concept of formation implies that there is a predetermined end that guides the forming process and that serves as a criterion to evaluate desired outcomes. Therefore, the phrase "character formation" implies an end or purpose that should direct and appraise whether or not a person's character has been sufficiently formed according its goal. Virtue ethics emphasizes such a criterion. That is, it is based on the assertion that the good that constitutes true human nature has a definite end or *telos*. To strive towards that *telos* and to achieve even an approximate realization of it is the quintessence of all true human flourishing. Implicit in the idea of a *telos* towards which humans must strive is the notion of disparity between what in fact we are versus what we potentially may become. As MacIntyre observes, within this "teleological scheme there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. Ethics is the science which is to enable men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the latter."[24] Virtue theory, therefore, highlights the differences between these two states and focuses on the "actions, habits, capacities and inclinations, precepts, injunctions, and prohibitions that will move us from point one to point two."[25] Accordingly, it encourages those actions that move us to our true end, and, conversely, discourages the vices that would lead us away from the realization of our true

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[24] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52. MacIntyre continues by stating, "Ethics therefore in this view presupposes some account of potentiality and act, some account of the essence of man as a rational animal and above all some account to the human *telos*. The precepts which enjoin the various virtues and prohibit the vices which are their counterparts instruct us how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize our true nature and to reach our true end."

[25] Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics,* 17.

end. Thus, virtue ethics underscores the need and possibility for growth which is dynamic not static: we are either moving toward or away from our *telos*. The ability to recognize the direction in which one is moving and the disparity between actuality and potentiality requires personal assessment and discernment based on clear criteria.

Joseph Kotva illustrates how the evaluative feature of virtue ethics is constitutive of its teleological nature and argues that it is best understood in terms of intention, function and roles. Thus he writes,

> It is helpful to note the way many concepts, particularly functional and role concepts yield evaluated criteria and judgments. Concepts such as 'watch,' 'knife,' 'farmer,' and 'father' yield such criteria and judgments. If we want to know what a 'good farmer' is, we look to the point, purpose, role, or function of a farmer—maximizing crop yield without devastating the land, for example. A good farmer is one who well fulfills the function, role, or purpose of a farmer. A bad or poor farmer is one who does not fulfill well the same function, role, or purpose.[26]

Understood in the same manner, the concept of human flourishing is to be evaluated in a teleological manner—purposes, function, and roles. "That is, human should be 'understood as having an essential nature and an essential purpose or function.' Thus, 'man' stands to 'good man' as... 'a farmer' to 'good farmer.'"[27] It is in light of our *telos* and the successful execution of those functions and purposes congruent with it that we are enabled to appraise what we are and to discern the appropriateness of our actions.

The farmer analogy illuminates the criteria for discerning why certain actions enable us to attain a fuller measure of our potential. To change the

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[26] Ibid., 17. We are indebted to Kotva's discussion of function of the implication of teleology, as well the illustrative ideas that follow.
[27] Ibid., 18.

metaphor, in order to understand what it is to be a good mechanic, it is necessary to know what a mechanic's functions are. The function of a good mechanic is not to play the bassoon in order to rebuild an engine. It follows, as Martha Nussbaum points out, that "[the] good functioning for any craft practitioner must remain within the boundaries of what that activity, in its nature, *is*. In the same way, it could not, logically, turn out that the best life for a human being was the good living of a life characteristic of ants."[28] Lifestyles and activities congruent with our human *telos* need to be encouraged and robustly carried out; the lifestyles and activities incongruent with our *telos* must be excluded since they draw us away from our true purpose and end.

These analogies help us see the importance of understanding the connection between our *telos* and the appropriate functions that cause us to flourish as human beings. At the same time, they help us determine the sort of capacities, traits, skills and attitudes that permit us to participate wisely and effectively in a craft. Again, to use another analogy, the purpose or function of a classical guitarist is to play with excellence a certain type of music that requires capacities, skills, and abilities such as manual dexterity, the ability to sight-read complex music scores, knowledge of music theory, and patient endurance of endless hours of practice. Such skills and capabilities are different than those needed by a rodeo star. Their purpose and function are not the same. Neither are the capacities, traits, and attitudes that

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[28] Martha Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 293. Quoted by Kotva, Ibid., 18. Emphasis is the author's.

are needed to master their respective professions. One does not acquire the necessary skills of a classical guitarist by training to ride a bucking bronco, nor is it possible by practicing scales and arpeggios to become a rodeo star. This is not to say, of course, that an individual cannot at the same time be a classical guitarist and a rodeo star; however, the skill-set needed for one will not properly develop the capacities needed to achieve the purpose of the other.

Furthermore, the recognition that the *telos* sets parameters that delimit appropriate actions does not necessarily signify that there is a single legitimate means by which to reach the *telos*. Sports games illustrate how distinct goals or ends are well-suited to a variety of means through which those ends might be realized. Sports games, as well as table games, have clearly defined goals and means by which they are played. The nature of the game limits allowable actions. For instance, one cannot dribble a basketball off the court in order to escape a defender and then score a three-point shot. In addition to limiting some actions, others are completely excluded. One does not tackle a basketball player from the opposing team when he is dribbling the ball down court. The nature of the game dictates the actions that are allowable and the skills that are necessary in order to play the game well. In fact, the rules make the game what it is and make playing the game a meaningful experience. Yet, as every true basketball aficionado will testify, the recognition of the game's inherent restrictions does not limit the seemingly infinite ways in which it may be played and its *telos* attained. Indeed, the limitations of a game encourage creativity, imagination, and the development

of various skills and strategies to play the game with élan. In like manner, virtue ethics with its concept of a determinate human *telos* that delimits allowable actions provides an almost unlimited number of ways for creativity and skill to be developed in order to achieve our *telos*.

The above analogies help us understand how a teleological outlook of virtue ethics functions. To understand the point, purpose, or function of a craft is to understand its *telos* or the good it seeks to achieve. In a similar fashion, in order to know who we are, what we are meant to do, and what skills we need in order to live with excellence we must first know the end for which we are created. The knowledge of our *telos* provides a contrast and tension between what in fact we are with the potential we possess for growth as we move toward a fuller realization of our true nature. The transition from our present state to a fuller, more robust realization of our potential is found in the acquisition of those skills, capacities, and habits that are constitutive of our *telos*. Consequently, our human potential is more than a fervent belief that an individual can achieve anything that he is able to imagine. Without a definite *telos* there is no purposeful criterion by which to appraise the value of such imaginings and the development of behaviors and attitudes that facilitate their attainment.

If the proponents of virtue ethics are correct in their assertion of the importance of teleology for a proper understanding of character formation, it necessarily follows that the manner in which the *telos* is envisaged is of the utmost importance. A *telos* that is too narrowly conceived would unduly restrict the kind and number of legitimate activities that could be undertaken

to attain it. If, however, the *telos* is a comprehensive and wide-ranging understanding of the human good, it would permit a multiplicity of legitimate skills and capacities by which the *telos* could be embodied. Nevertheless, the conception of the good to be pursued cannot be so extensive as to allow any activity without qualification; specificity is needed. As Kotva states, "The *telos* needs to be specific enough to provide guidance for acquiring the virtues, but it need not be so definite that it eliminates all but a few ways of living."[29] Individuals who inhabit different cultures and who fulfill various roles in those cultures are able to live a life of excellence that reflects a common human *telos*.

The concept of teleology, as explained above, possesses enormous implications for the formation of a Christian leader's character through the medium of theological education. Whether with a fixed intention or not, every leader moves toward some established goal with a group of people for some intended purpose through specified means. In light of this we need to ask, what is the *telos* of the group? Why does it exist? What is its mission? What kind of person does the leader need to be in order to lead in a fashion that reflects the group's *telos*? Are the means employed by the leader and group congruent with the end they seek? In keeping with the theme of this project we can ask, what character qualities must students possess in order to achieve the institution's *telos*? Or to put it another way, what moral skills, capacities, and attitudes are called for in order to attain the end for which theological education exists? With regard to theological education we should ask, in light

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[29] Ibid., 23.

of the school's *telos*, what are its inherent limitations and creative possibilities? Are the criteria used to evaluate the institution's success consistent with the institution's *telos*? All of these important questions arise out of a teleological understanding of character formation. We can see, therefore, the importance of assessing students' expectations. Nevertheless, along the same lines as Hunter's caveat about the properties of character, teleology is meaningless unless its particular content is clearly defined. To comprehend the significance of a person's or institution's *telos*, it is first necessary to identify the story that gives it meaning and serves as the apologia for its existence. In order to do this, we must now turn our attention to the subject of narrative.

Narrative

The dictionary defines narrative as "a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious."[30] We can expand on this definition by adding that narrative is the recitation of incidents and experiences usually linked together in the order in which they occurred. Narrative, however, is more than the retelling of facts, events or historical episodes; it is an arrangement of persons and events that are unified on a plotline that organizes what would otherwise be a perplexing and random assortment of actions and events. The importance of narrative, however, especially its function in shaping our daily lives, far exceeds this dictionary definition.

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[30] *Random House Webster's College Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Merriam-Webster, 1997, s.v. "narrative."

One of the distinctive marks of our humanness is the ability to tell stories.
As Alasdair MacIntyre baldly states, "Man is in his actions and practice
...essentially a story-telling animal."[31] Story-telling is more than an idle form
of entertainment; it is a vital activity. Stories may be entertaining, but, as we
shall see, they provide an essential framework that guides our perception of
the world and makes sense out of our lives. In fact, for MacIntyre, the notion
of narrative is so wide-ranging that he claims that all our conversations and
actions are "enacted narratives." That is, rather than being random
occurrences, our conversations and actions are always part of a larger
historical narrative. Story-telling, then, is a fundamental activity of human
existence that furnishes the context in which conversations and actions
become intelligible. As MacIntyre says,

> In successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing
> we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set
> of narrative histories. . . . [W]e render the actions of others intelligible in
> this way because action itself has a basically historical character. It is
> because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand
> our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of
> narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories
> are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction.[32]

Our life, then, is composed of the stories that we tell about ourselves and
others by which we understand our world and those who inhabit it. Of course,
this conceptualization of story-telling runs contrary to the popular belief that
narrative is, in large part, fictitious or that it serves only as illustrative
material that explains abstract universal ideas. It also challenges the notion
that story-telling is an unsophisticated form of communication found

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[31] McIntyre, *After Virtue*, 216.
[32] Ibid., 211-212.

principally among primitive cultures and appreciated in modern society only among the less educationally enlightened.

The stories that MacIntyre refers to are part of a larger, more encompassing meta-narrative that possesses credible explanatory power of the world. N. T. Wright has deepened our appreciation of narrative by pointing out how narrative coalesces with three other fundamental elements to construct a worldview.[33] A meta-narrative answers basic questions of life, which include the question of identity: Who are we?, the question of our environment: Where are we?, the question of evil: What is wrong?, and the question of eschatology: What is the solution? The answers to these questions are expressed in cultural symbols that celebrate a way of life. Cultural symbols include works of art, monuments, flags, and events such as national holidays, family gatherings, and rites of passage. For the observant, symbols serve as social "boundaries-markers" that indicate who is a member of the group and who is not. Moreover, embedded in the answers to life's big questions is a call to action, to social praxis, to a way-of-being-in-the-world prescribed by the stories that make up a meta-narrative. Taken together, these four elements construct a worldview and provide "the grid through which humans perceive reality" and out of which there "emerge[s] into explicit consciousness... human beliefs, and aims."[34] Narrative, then, is "a reality-making claim,"[35] an essential property of worldviews that influences our moral discipline and attachments by defining the good to be pursued and the vices to be eschewed.

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[33] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 37- 38 and 121-144.

[34] Ibid., 124.

[35] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 29.

Stories are the means by which we perceive and relate to the world. Whether consciously or not, we make sense out of our experiences in the world and the innumerable pieces of information that daily inundate us by placing them in the context of stories. Consequently, through stories we process, organize, and assign value to the information we receive, evaluate our relationships with others, assess and reflect on our life experiences, and measure the relative success or failure of our life. Moreover, stories open up vistas for the imagination in art and literature. For example, morality plays provide a way to learn what it means to be moral, wise, compassionate, as well as immoral, foolish, and unfeeling. Stories also instruct us in the way that we are to fulfill the roles that have been assigned to us by society. The tales about the graces and triumphs of Cinderella-type figures, generous uncles, faithful friends, faithless spouses, courageous heroes, spineless cowards, knaves and fools make up the standard characters of typical stories. Through these stock characters we learn what is socially expected of us and how we should respond to individuals who resemble the characters found in our cultural stories.[36] It is little wonder, then, that Wright can say that "stories are a basic constituent of human life."[37]

As MacIntyre has reminded us, narrative also directs our attention to the fact that we are historically formed creatures. In order to speak cogently about

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[36] MacIntyre states, "It is through hearing stories about wicked step-mothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words." *After Virtue*, 216.

[37] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* 38.

our identity and character, we are required to speak of our personal and corporate histories. Or as Hauerwas states, "Since the self is historically formed we require a narrative to speak about it if we are to speak at all."[38] Like the history of a nation or like the characters of a captivating saga, our lives do not consist of a single event or episode but of a series of episodes that occur during different periods and circumstances of our lifetime, which includes shared experiences, emotional attachments with family, friends, and acquaintances, and difficulties with enemies. In addition, our story is connected with places, ideas, and institutions that give particular significance to our lives. Thus, in recounting the story of our life, we seek to understand the significance of our relationships, patterns of behavior, choices, activities, achievements, our roles within institutions, and our successes and failures that have given shape to what we have become and are in the process of becoming.

An awareness of personal narrative provides a sense of coherence by pulling together the disparate historical features of our lives. Yet it is not a coherence that can be traced through deductions of logic, neither is it the coherence of unimpeded progress from one phase of spiritual growth to another. "Rather it is a coherence of a story, the telling of which may well include attempts to make sense of tragic failures, seemingly gratuitous detours, bothersome mysteries, and breathtaking surprises."[39] Although we may speak of defining moments in our lifetime, these moments are only

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[38] Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 26.
[39] Richard J. Mouw, *The God Who Commands: A Study in Divine Command Ethics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 134.

intelligible in light of our overall narrative. Therefore, unlike the tight logic

that makes up a computer program, the logic of narrative becomes evident in

the light of an overarching plotline that unfolds progressively as we move

toward the *telos* of our life. Like Christian, the chief protagonist in John

Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrims Progress*, the events, characters, and places that

affect our spiritual growth are explicable only in light of a narrative plotline.

In Christian's case, the plotline was his pilgrimage from the City of

Destruction to the Celestial City. His determination to reach the Celestial City

and his resolve to continue his quest, particularly when faced with the

temptation to turn aside, both formed and disclosed his character.

The simple retelling of the facts and events of our life, even when a

coherent pattern is discovered, still begs the question as to its meaning.

Personal significance that is sought only by an intense inward gaze is too

limited; the desire for significance is too intense to be satisfied by a personal

narrative that is disconnected from a more comprehensive story.[40] As

MacIntrye notes, "The key question for men is not about their own

authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer

the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"[41] The

conviction that our personal narrative is valuable must reside outside the self

in some transcendent point of reference. Needed is a meta-narrative that sets

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[40] Mouw suggests, "The recent interest in and emphasis upon narrative has arisen from the therapeutic revolution. Looking at this from one perspective it seems as though it is yet another example of the subjectivism that is so rife in popular culture. Yet it may well be that it arises out of the desire to escape a purely subjective stance towards life." Ibid.

[41] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 216.

our lives on a path toward a purposeful end and summons us to devotion and sacrifice.

As in Hunter's definition of moral attachment, character is shaped when we see ourselves as part of a transcendent narrative. Neil Postman, in an effort to accentuate the formative function that narrative plays within our communities, has designated the great story that shapes our lives as "a *god* with a little *g*." As he states,

> It is the purpose of such figures or images to direct one's mind to an idea and, more to my point, to a story—not any kind of story, but one that tells of origins and envisions a future, a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and, above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose. A god, in the sense I am using the word, is the name of a great narrative, one that has sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable one to organize one's life around it.[42]

It is the function of a great story to animate, to inspire participation and sacrifice by giving us a sense of transcendent meaning; it is this function of great narratives that makes them indispensable.

A grand and meaningful story gives significance to our corporate and personal life; it dignifies our vocation, relationships, and daily activities. Therefore, Postman, in underscoring his assertion that we are a storied people, brings out the vital connection between narrative and education. As he says, "Our genius lies in our capacity to make meaning through the creation of narratives that give point to our labors, exalt our history, elucidate the present, and give direction to our future....Without a narrative life has no

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[42] Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York Vintage Books, 1996), 5-6.

meaning. Without meaning learning has no purpose."[43] While we are not in agreement that as Christians we make our own meaning by creating a composite narrative, we do agree that the grand narrative found within Scripture functions in the ways described by Postman.

Christian self-identity is shaped as we see ourselves in relationship to God's story in which he has invited us to participate by making a positive response to the good news. By doing so we join with others who seek to live faithfully by the gospel and together give corporate expression to our faith through lives marked by obedient discipleship. In this manner, we come to know ourselves in a way that would not otherwise be possible, for our personal narrative has been taken up into God's great narrative. By including us in his story, our lives are imbued with transcendent meaning as we move toward his purposeful end. Accordingly, the biblical narrative functions in much the same way as described by virtue ethics. "It embeds our life within the framework of a meta-narrative that tells of our origins, envisions a future, constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and . . . gives a sense of continuity and purpose."[44] While the biblical narrative bears a striking similarity to virtue ethics in terms of its function, the story it tells is quite remarkable.

In the biblical story, God is the chief protagonist—he is the hero. His creative power, holiness, loving-kindness, and grace are his defining essence. Although as human beings we are created in his image, "crowned with glory

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[43] Ibid., 7.
[44] Ibid., 5.

and honor," our existence remains finite and contingent upon the gift of life that proceeds from his goodness.[45] Indeed, it is in the face of our hubris and rebellion that God demonstrates his overwhelming wisdom and saving power in a manner that can only be described as counterintuitive: He is the king who humbles himself to serve, the champion who takes it upon himself to eradicate all barriers to fellowship without compromising his essential goodness. While other meta-narratives may use similar nomenclature with regard to virtue, the impulse and vigor of Christian virtue ethics finds its unique signature in the biblical narrative.

The recognition of the biblical narrative's particularity underscores the essential role that it plays in shaping Christian character and outlook on life. It is this story and not another that differentiates Christian virtue ethics from alternatives; it is this story and not another that forms our vision of what is true, and, thus, sets our life's priorities. Participation in the grand biblical narrative entails the formation of skills and habits that train us to live congruently and faithfully by the story of the gospel. Such training disallows superficial comparisons between character and personality and the idea that character is easily acquired through technique. Rather, it is the education of our essential being that marks every facet of our life. Or as Craig Dykstra states, "The story that constitutes my character is not just a story that I tell

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[45] Ps 8:5.

about myself. It is the story that shines through my life. It is the story that my life tells."[46]

As we have seen, the stories that make up an overarching narrative have an epistemic function; they provide a cognitive map that directs us in our efforts to perceive and relate to the world; they give us a way to make sense out of the details of our life and help us to discern the priorities that should guide us. Stories that amend and deepen our understanding of the world and our role in it have the power to transform our life; they convert us to another way of thinking, acting, and feeling. In other words, they play a "subversive role" by providing a new way of perceiving the world. According to N. T. Wright,

> Stories are, actually, peculiarly good at modifying or subverting other stories and their worldviews. Where head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favour which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden away for safety....Tell someone to do something, and you change their life—for a day; tell someone a story and you change their life.[47]

Here, then, is another instance of the transformative power of story. It needs to be noted, however, that the subversive feature of narrative can work both for and against the particularity of Christian character formation. On the one hand, stories deepen our understanding of the grand narrative and challenge our misconception of behaviors and attitudes that are incongruent with it. Thus, as we learn to "indwell"[48] our meta-narrative, the gospel, we learn that

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[46] Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg* (New York: Paulist Press 1981), 52.

[47] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* 40.

[48] The idea of indwelling a narrative comes from Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 99.

there is a need for continual conversion. On the other hand, we come into contact with stories other than the gospel that are compelling and solicit our freely given compliance. It is not unusual to participate in various communities which influence our self-understanding and personal commitments. Interaction with co-workers, neighbors, non-Christian friends, and individuals from other cultures challenge the credibility of our narrative, offering alternative stories by which to live. As Christians we are not given the option of withdrawal from these daily associations. Rather, as our character is trained to live faithfully by the biblical story, we are enabled to assess the compelling stories of other communities and individuals without either surrendering the integrity of the gospel or demeaning the humanity of those shaped by alternative narratives. To live by the gospel with such integrity requires more than individual effort; it also calls for robust participation in a community that provides us with the necessary resources to be virtuous.[49]

Community

The connection between a meta-narrative, *telos*, community, practice, and virtue is vital. Participation in community is indispensable to the formation of character. The reason for this is simple: it is through the presence of others that we learn the grammar of character and see it enacted. Indeed, we could not progress morally without the instruction and guidance of parents, friends, teachers, and role models. Because of this, virtue ethicists are quick to point out the importance of mentoring, imitation, and friendship

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[49] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character,* 125.

as vital means through which our character is shaped.[50] Moreover, life in community is essential to the human good itself since the teleological conception of the human good is both individual and corporate. As Kotva notes, "Relationships and shared activities are central to the human good. The human *telos* is found in common projects, shared activities, and intimate relationships. The solitary life, one lacking the company of others, lacks elements essential to the *telos*."[51] It is within community that virtues such as love, long-suffering, goodness, justice, wisdom, and courage, just to name a few, find their meaning and are developed; without a wholehearted participation in community, the aforementioned virtues lose their point and purpose.

Additionally, the quality of communal relationships and activity give concrete social expression to the essential features of the community's meta-narrative. As Hunter has stated, character is formed "within particular structures of moral reasoning and practice," which "are fixed in social habit and routine within social groups and communities."[52] Or as Stanley Hauerwas has reminded us, our grand story requires "a community capable of forming people with virtues sufficient to witness to God's truth in the world."[53] Community, then, is the arena in which the formation of our character takes

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[50] Hauerwas and Willimon point out, "Moral life is life lived on the basis of example. A person becomes just by imitating just persons. One way of teaching good habits is by watching good people, learning the moves, imitating the way they relate to the world. For Aristotle, apprenticeship was essential to the task of morality—an ethically inexperienced person looking over the shoulder of someone who was good at it." *Resident Aliens,* 98-99.

[51] Kotva, *The Case for Christian Virtue Ethics*, 21.

[52] Hunter, *The Death of Character*, 11.

[53] Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* 3. Elsewhere Hauerwas has written that the Christian story "requires the formation of a corresponding community which has learned to live in a way that makes it possible for them to hear that story." *Christian Existence Today,* 101. See also his work, *A Peaceable Kingdom,* Chap. 6.

place. To become a member of a particular community is to share the community's most fundamental convictions and vision of life and to make them our own. Consequently, our personal drama is taken up into the great story and intermeshed with the stories of others whose lives are also being shaped in light of the same grand narrative. Through shared language, customs, symbols, and rituals that celebrate and retell the stories of the community's narrative we are trained to envision life in a particular fashion.[54] As Hunter's definition makes clear, character formation is

> the affirmation of our commitments to a larger community . . . [and] is, in explicit ways, the embodiment of the ideals of a moral order—it is formed in relation to the imperatives of that moral order that are embedded in the life of a community of moral discourse.[55]

If virtue ethicists are correct about the necessity of community to shape character, theological institutions face greater challenges than might be normally imagined. This is due to the fact that community can be understood in a self-serving manner. The tendency in a liberal society [56] is to give preference to the individual, who takes priority over other considerations. Liberal governments exist to guard the rights of individuals to pursue their personal desires unrestricted from interdictions of others. While this may be good governmental policy, its effect on Christian community and the

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[54] As Stanley Grenz remarks, "Thinkers in a wide variety of disciplines….theorize that the process of knowing and to some extent even experience of the world can only occur within a conceptual framework mediated by the social community in which a person participates. In the same way, personal identity is formed within social structures. We understand not only the world but also ourselves by means of an intricate web of traditions and beliefs…. The web of belief is transmitted to us by the social group within which the ongoing process of identity formation occurs." *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 7.

[55] *Death of Character*, 16.

[56] We are using the concept of a "liberal society" in a more historical manner, meaning individual persons not bound by an authority derived from orthodoxy or tradition. Webster's International Dictionary s.v. "liberal".

institutions that support it is lethal. Members of a culture who have been

formed to give priority to personal preference, often understood as the quest

for meaning through sensate experiences and consumerism, will tend to view

community as a way to find self-fulfillment.[57] Even the biblical gift of

salvation can become a vehicle for self-fulfillment, making virtue a matter of

individual choice that has nothing to do with the Christian community. As

Simon Chan has pressed home,

> The purpose of Christian formation is not developing a better self-image,
> achieving self-fulfillment or finding self-affirmation; nor is it the
> development of individualistic qualities that make singularly outstanding
> saints. Rather, it is developing certain qualities that enable us to live
> responsibly within the community that we have been baptized into.
> Virtues are ecclesially based.[58]

Where this perspective is missing among seminary students (as well as among

professors and administrators), the autocracy of self-fulfillment will certainly

affect how they perceive theological education and leadership development. If

these are understood only as ends to self-fulfillment, the desire for the

formation of godly character is cut at the root since it runs contrary to the

need for community with all its particularity, which is a fundamental aspect of

character formation. As a consequence, leadership degenerates into a quest

for self-realization that brooks no challenge to the ends it pursues, and

theological education becomes the means through which it is attained.

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[57] David Wells has written, "Expressive individualism…assumes that all people have a unique core of intuitions and feelings within them that is then coupled with the understanding that they have the inherent right to pursue and express these intuitions and feelings. This often expresses itself as a desire for refuge from the harsh competition produced by capitalism. Where this happens, expressive individualists seek to be free from all constraints and, in consumption and leisure, find solace for the wounds the soul absorbed at the workplace." *Losing Our Virtue* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 68.

[58] Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 102-103.

Practices

To better understand the correlation between narrative, community, and how virtue is nurtured serious consideration must be given to the concept of social practices. As Wright has noted, a social praxis is one of the essential features of a worldview that" expresses a way-of-being-in-the-world"[59] as set down by the stories that make up a meta-narrative. Practices are the means though which communities embody and enact the convictions that flow from their meta-narrative. Alasdair MacIntyre has developed the concept of practices and has defined it in the following manner:

> By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which the goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.[60]

We need to parse more closely MacIntyre's definition in order to understand its importance and its application to our subject. First, a practice is not simply an exercise of individual achievements made in isolation from others; rather it is an endeavor put into effect as a "coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity." For example, law, medicine, and education are practices that meet MacIntyre's criteria. Other activities, however, such as "throwing a football with skill," do not fit his conceptualization of practice, whereas "the game of football does."[61] Second, repeating much of what was stated in the section on *telos*, a practice is carried

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[59] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* 124.
[60] MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* 187.
[61] Ibid.

out with a view toward realizing the *telos* for which the community exists; it is

an end-means activity in which "the goods internal to that form of activity are

realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which

are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity." Thus, how

we achieve the *telos* is as important as the *telos* itself. There are limited

means; not all activities are suitable, only those that seek the "goods internal"

of the *telos* are apposite. Third, the consequence of suitable means

appropriately undertaken systematically extends "human powers to achieve

excellence and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved."

Consequently, a practice embodies and extends virtues, since "it is the

practices that sustain the virtues and school us in what they properly are."[62]

James McClendon illustrates MacIntyre's idea of practices by

comparing them to the nature of games.[63] Following Suits, McClendon

enumerates four features of game-playing: the *end* or goal of the game

(getting the football across the goal line into the end zone), the *limited means*

(completing a pass or running the ball across the goal line and kicking the ball

through the uprights), the *rules* (at the end of the fourth quarter of play, the

team with the most points scored wins the game), and *lusory attitude*,

(intending to play the game).[64] All these elements are essential to games. By

the very nature of the case, winning a game is secondary to the game's goal or

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[62] Jonathan R. Wilson, *Gospel Virtues: Practicing Faith, Hope and Love in Uncertain Times* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 44.

[63] James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), chap. 6. Of course, by using the analogy of games neither Suits nor McClendon seek to demean or diminish the seriousness of character formation. Admittedly, the metaphor has its limitations, but it also goes a long way in helping us see the importance and function of communal practices.

[64] Ibid., 170.

end. That is, a "game must have a *goal* that is logically prior to the goal of winning,"[65] a previously established end that indicates how the game is won and what criteria determines who wins the game. For example, it would not be possible for us to determine who won a football game without indicating the goal line before the game had started and that the winning team is the one that scores the most points. Next, games possess *limited means* to achieve their *telos*. The limited means allowable for a football game includes such things as a forward pass, a run, a tackle, etc. It does not include hitting the football with a baseball bat or a tennis racquet. All participants in a game must accept its legitimate *rules* in order to play, or else someone might try to win the game by picking up the football while the offense is in the huddle and cross the goal line as many times as possible in an attempt to win the game. It can be seen, then, that the rules of a game are not arbitrary and cannot be abandoned at will while playing a game; rather, rules are constitutive, making the game what it is. For example, the rules that define the game of football are not the same rules that define the game of golf. "To disregard the constitutive rules...is not a way to win at all...it simply shows failure to understand what the rules are, that is, what constitutes the game itself."[66]

Thus we come to the *lusory attitude* that players must possess; that is, they must intend to play the game. Again following Suits, McClendon notes that "playing a game is the *voluntary* attempt to overcome *necessary* obstacle. Here 'necessary' must mean 'called for not by the goal itself, but only

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

by the rules,' and 'voluntary' points to the players' lusory attitudes."[67]

Returning to the analogy of football, an obstacle called for by the rules might include a team that attempts to win the game in its last seconds by completing a pass into the end zone. The drama of the moment is created by the *telos* and the rules that state that the team with the most points, when time runs out in the fourth quarter, wins. The nature of the game, set down by the rules, not only requires that the game be played in a set amount of time, but it also specifies the goal and means by which the team playing offense can win the game (completing a pass to an open receiver in the end zone), and how the team playing defense can stop the opposing team from winning (intercepting or blocking a pass, sacking the quarterback). A lusory attitude is one in which the players enter the game to win but do so by following the rules and overcoming the necessary obstacles they create.

A lusory attitude also distinguishes players from three types of non-players: the "trifler," who plays at the game but does not put his heart into it, the "spoilsport," who disrupts the game or renders it useless because he does not get his way, and the "cheat," who disregards the rules in order to win. Thus, according to Suits, "triflers recognize rules but not goals, cheats recognize goals but not rules, players recognize both rules and goals and spoilsports recognize neither." [68] The sports analogy illustrates admirably the basic elements of social practices, particularly the role of rules and the important nexus between ends and means. In addition, the contrast between

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[67] Ibid., 171. Emphasis is the author's.
[68] Quoted by McClendon, Ibid., p. 171.

true and fraudulent players helps illustrate the significance of personal intentions and dispositions needed in order to achieve the goods internal to a practice. The comparison between practices and games reveals some striking similarities. Both are communal activities with particular ends or goal; both have appropriate means ("internal goods") to achieve those ends; both have inherent rules ("standards of excellence") that define the meaning of an activity; and both embody and extend virtue ("powers to achieve excellence").

Community and its practices are inextricably bound together. Practices such as science, medicine, and games have a history, and their standards of excellence are not a matter of private judgment. The idea of lusory attitude helps illuminate the spirit in which we are to participate in a practice. In MacIntyre's definition, a practice involves standards of excellence that summon us to obedience. As he writes, "To enter into a practice is to accept the authority of those standards and the inadequacy of my own performance as judged by them. It is to subject my own attitudes, choices, preferences and tastes to the standards which currently and partially define the practice."[69] Obedience here does not mean passive acquiescence, nor does it mean that a practice cannot be modified in the course of history. But at the end of day, any revision of a practice is judged by the community in relation to its "living tradition,"[70] its conception of its *telos* and "the virtues that it seeks to

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[69] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.
[70] According to MacIntyre a "living tradition" is narrative based and is "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." His conception of a living tradition is not to be confused with conservative conventionalism. "It is rather the case that an adequate sense of tradition manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present. Living traditions …

embody."[71] The biblical virtues of faith, hope, and love and the practices that train us in them do not mean whatever we wish them to mean. They stand in relationship to the living tradition of the gospel that defines their essence. Of course, this view of an active participation in a practice runs completely contrary to modern emotivism that MacIntyre so carefully criticizes. His emphasis, however, is to point out that in order to advance in the goods internal to a practice it is necessary to submit to its inherent rules.

The concept of submission to the excellence of a practice in not so uncommon and oppressive as it might seem. For instance, induction and training in the practice of medicine or law require that we admit our ignorance and seek the wisdom and knowledge of advance practitioners. We can think of a beginning violinist entering the practice of music. Personal opinion about how to play the violin is of little importance. In order to learn how to play well, the neophyte violinist must "submit" himself to the training set out by a more knowledgeable practitioner of the art. Here is where lusory attitude is important. By possessing the right attitude, the novice musician takes to heart the expertise of the maestro in order to advance in the practice of music. By submitting to the expertise of an advanced practitioner, the apprentice musician not only avoids forming bad habits that will eventually undercut his effort to play complex pieces of music, but he will also acquire the habits and attitudes that will achieve the goods internal to the practice; and by becoming proficient he will extend the practice.

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continue a not-yet-completed narrative, [and] confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses any, derives from the past." Ibid., 222 and 223.

[71] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 44-45.

The idea of lusory attitude also needs to be understood in the light of an important distinction that MacIntyre makes between internal goods and external goods. External goods are "always some individual's property and possession."[72] Thus they become the objects of competition, since the more an individual possesses the less there are for others. Internal goods, on the other hand, are "still the outcome of competition to excel, but it is characteristic of them that their achievement is a good of the whole community who participate in the practice."[73] MacIntyre's definition of external and internal goods may not stand the test of every practice without reference to the contingencies of a given situation, but it is a helpful distinction that demonstrates an important nexus between community, end-means activities, and a proper attitude. For example, an individual may enter the practice of medicine to gain money, fame through success, or to exercise power over others rather than seeking the well-being of his patients. However, in seeking the goods internal to the practice of medicine, a doctor will be a conscientious practitioner who will tend to find satisfaction in the practice for its own intrinsic value. He will seek to stay current with the latest research in his area of expertise, and he will be less likely to prescribe drugs that are unnecessary or to become involved in schemes to defraud insurance companies or the government by over-billing his patients. As a conscientious practitioner, the physician contributes to the well-being of the whole community.

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[72] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.
[73] Ibid.

Virtues

Virtues[74] are essential elements of narrative, community, and practices.

It is narrative that calls forth the virtues and defines them; the virtues, in

turn, are indispensable for the community to realize its *telos*; they are the way

in which the members of the community participate in the grand narrative. In

English, the word virtue is defined as conformity of one's life and conduct to

moral principles, moral excellence or rectitude, or effective force, power, or

potency.[75] The Latin *virtus* signifies something like "power," understood as

the capability to accomplish something good,[76] while the Greek ἀρητή can be

translated as "a manifestation of divine power, miracle," or "moral excellence

or virtue."[77] In light of what we have seen above, this dictionary definition of

virtue is limited in scope, since it lacks any discussion of narrative, *telos*, or

community with its social practices that seek to achieve internal goods.

MacIntyre puts it succinctly when he writes: "A virtue is an acquired human

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[74] The word "virtue" has lost its descriptive power among most modern English speakers. Gertrude Himmelfarb has demonstrated that historically the word was used in the plural, "virtues," which signified desirable qualities of moral excellence such as wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance. Over time the use of word narrowed, and the plural dropped out of popular usage as the singular, "virtue," came to refer mostly to sexual matters. Thus, if a single woman was said to have "lost her virtue" it meant that she had been sexually unchaste. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the advent of birth control and a new social openness toward sex outside of marriage, the word largely disappeared from the lexicon of modern moral discourse and has been replaced by the word "values." *The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 3-20.

[75] Webster's College Dictionary (1997), s.v. "virtue."

[76] David W. Gill, *Becoming Good: Building Moral Character* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 30. The idea that the word "virtue" was once used in English as power or enablement can be seen in the King James Version where the translators used the word virtue to translate the Greek δύναμις in Mark 5:30.

[77] The word ἀρητή appears in the LXX in Isa. 42:8, 12, where it is used synonymously with δόξα; in the NT it appears only in Phil. 4:8, 1 Peter 2:9 (which is a quote of the Isa. 42 passage), and 2 Peter 1:3, 5. The word is widely attested in antiquity. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd, s.v. "ἀρητή." In Mark 5:30, The King James Version translates δύναμις as 'virtue.' *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "ἀρητή," by Bauernfeind.

quality, the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."[78] As already noted, the excellence of a concert pianist or a classical guitarist is to play their instruments well. Such skills are developed by subordination to the guidance and expertise of an advanced practitioner. Accordingly, a practice is sustained and advanced by virtues such as humility, courage, and honesty. Where such qualities are lacking we obstruct the way to achieve the goods internal to a practice. In other words, to use illegitimate means (cheat) in an attempt to achieve the standards of excellence we render "the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods."[79]

Kotva highlights two other features of virtues that are important to note. First, virtues encompass a wide spectrum of human thought, emotion, desire, and volition. Some are more cognitive than affective and others are more affective than cognitive. Still others are more volitional, while many display a combination of all these characteristics. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that virtues are the fruit of one particular human faculty to the exclusion of others, since it would ignore other essential features of our humanness and, as a consequence, skew our understanding of character formation.[80] It is the whole person that is virtuous and not just one part.

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[78] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.
[79] Ibid.
[80] G. Simon Harak speaks to the issue of the Cartesian error when he writes, "To adopt the prevailing popular Cartesian model…would mean that we would be cut off from passions, and from our body, ironically, especially if we are virtuous and strong. But we can't be. A person would not be fully human without a body, and not be fully moral without finding a way to integrate passions into his

Second, virtues consist of habits, dispositions, and tendencies to act and react in a coherent manner in comparable situations. Thus, a virtuous person is consistent and constant in his actions, passions, and choices. Moreover, virtues are acquired through habituation over a long period of time; they are not acquired by a single act or choice but my many acts and choices within the various contexts and roles one has in the course of daily life. Since the virtues are acquired through habituation, they are not lost overnight by a single act of neglect or waywardness. After all, it is possible to act out of character. It is essential to note that virtues are gained progressively through consistent practice or lost through constant disregard. Because of this dynamic, genuine transformation of character seldom comes quickly or easily; but once gained, virtuous habits do not suddenly vanish.

It should be obvious that virtue ethics gives priority to "being" over "doing." This is not to say that action is unimportant, but rather that the state of our character precedes our actions. Indeed, we act out of who we are. The relationship between "being" and "doing" is a dialectical one—being precedes doing but doing also gives shape to being, which in turn informs and shapes the decisions and actions we make.[81] To quote Kotva, "We act out of who we are. One who has a just orientation and character will generally treat others fairly. One who has a cowardly orientation and character will often make

moral project." *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993), 10.

[81] Stassen and Gushee warn that an emphasis on being that diminishes doing is "a fundamental error. Doing is crucial to character ethics in that *practices shape character*. We are the kind of people we are because of what we do, what we *practice*." Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 73. Emphasis is the author's.

decisions based on fear and run from danger at inappropriate times. Cowardly choices and action also tend to reinforce a cowardly character or weaken a courageous character."[82] Thus virtue ethics' concern for "being" does not negate a proper concern for "doing," rather it acknowledges that apposite actions are thoroughly related to virtuous character.

This understanding of virtue has vast implications for the practice of theological education and Christian leadership. To take part, for example, in the great story of the gospel is to participate in the community of faith. This requires qualities of character that are developed through communal practices, such as worship, acts of service, preaching, teaching, communion, and baptism. These practices embody and enact the communal convictions that arise from the gospel story. To sustain these practices and to achieve the internal goods of the biblical *telos*, it is necessary to acquire biblical virtues such as faith, hope, love, and patience. Here it is again necessary to emphasize that while virtues have an instrumental function to lead us to our *telos*, they do not simply function in an instrumental manner. They are also constitutive elements of the best kind of human life. Placing this feature of the virtues in a Christian perspective, it is possible to say that the acquisition of virtue is to anticipate and experience in a proleptic manner the life that will be fully ours in eternity. Seen in this way, Christian leaders and those preparing to be Christian leaders through theological education cannot slough off a virtuous life or make it secondary to competencies that they possess. Indeed, the very

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[82] Kotva, *The Case for Christian Virtue Ethics*, 30.

raison d'être of Christian leadership has to do with leading the people of God in the fulfillment of the gospel's *telos.*

Summary

As has been stated, virtue ethics provides a way to ponder the various features of character formation in a holistic manner that gives direction to ESEPA's desire to contribute to the formation of its students' character. Virtue ethics' teleological emphasis raises several important concerns for theological institutions. First, theological education must have a clear *telos* that transcends utilitarian considerations, as it is the *telos* that determines the outcomes that are sought and defines the legitimate means needed to achieve those outcomes. This means it is necessary to envision theological education as a social practice that functions to achieve the internal goods of school's *telos.* Virtue is needed in order to sustain the practice of education. This is not what is commonly expected of theological education. We can see, then, the importance of assessing students' expectations about character formation within the context of theological education. What character qualities must students possess in order to achieve the institution's *telos*? What moral skills, capacities, and attitudes are called for in order to attain the end for which theological education exists?

The question concerning the *telos* of theological education has been pondered by preceding generations of theologians, but not always with an eye toward the formation of character as much as a to define a program of studies. In his work, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, H. Richard Niebuhr asserted that theological education concerns God and our faithfulness to him,

and the training of Christian leaders finds its reason for being in the purpose of the church that God has called into existence. In a memorable phrase, Niebuhr defined the purpose of the church as "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor."[83] Niebuhr lamented what he saw as the inversion of means and ends in which proximate goals had become ultimate. That is, theological education shifted its focused from the formation of lovers of God and neighbor to the tasks that Christian leaders perform. Whenever a theological institution confuses the proximate for the ultimate, the education it offers is reduced to indoctrination and training in method. Although Niebuhr's definition of the purpose of the church is teleological, his work lacks any critical reflection on the need for virtue and the part it plays in seeking to achieve the church's *telos*. In fairness, Niebuhr's study was not about character formation, as such, but a reflection on the need for seminaries to define more exactly their reason for being and design a curriculum accordingly. It should also be pointed out that at the time he wrote the nature of character and its importance for Christian leaders was more widely agreed upon that it is now.[84] Notwithstanding these observations, Niebuhr's remark that the ultimate purpose of theological education as the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor is an important reminder of the transcendent

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[83] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Brother, 1956), 27.

[84] Richard John Neuhaus has pointed out that, "As recently as forty years ago there was very little disagreement among Christians—indeed, among Americans in general—about the need as to what kind of people we ought to be and how we ought to live our lives. The witness of the churches was virtually unanimous on numerous questions that are today hotly controverted. Marriage, adultery, divorce, gender roles, homosexuality, abortions—none of these were deemed 'controversial' issues forty years ago….There is no denying the fact that much that was, until fairly recently, taken for granted must now be argued for." Richard Jonh Neuhaus, ed., *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), vii-ix.

purpose of the church from which theological education derives its *raison d'être*. His observation, however, needs to be coupled with MacIntyre's conception of communal practices that seek, through standards of excellence, the internal goods of its *telos* which forms and extends virtue. Conceived in this manner, the practice of theological education becomes an instrument of character formation. On the part of the students, this calls for a lusory attitude, a willingness to align themselves with the goal of achieving the standard of excellence and the internal goods that theological education seeks to achieve. This would mean that students seek to avoid becoming one of Suits's three typologies: 1) a "trifler," who recognizes the rules of theological education but not its goal; 2) a "spoilsport," who does not regard as important either the rules or the goal; 3) the "cheat," who knows the rules of theological education but disregards them in order to achieve the goods external—which in this case would be a diploma or social status. For students to avoid these attitudes they must develop such virtues as humility—a willingness to admit the inadequacy of one's knowledge as judged by the standard of excellence, constancy, and honesty.

Without a clear definition the concept of a *telos* remains theoretical and vague. A meta-narrative is needed to give direction and coherence to the community and its efforts to train its leaders. Theological education should deepen and intensify its students' knowledge of the grand biblical narrative, since it possesses great explanatory power to define our purpose, give direction to our lives, shape our self-understanding, and elicit our freely given obedience. As human beings, we are, to use David Jeffrey's phrase,

"inextricably middled,"[85] that is, we are in the middle of our own stories with a vague knowledge of the beginning and the end of our lives. It is the grand biblical narrative that explains God's exquisite designs for all creation and his redemptive designs through Christ that makes known to us our beginning and end. It is this story that makes sense out of our "muddled middle."[86] It orients our lives and fills the vision of our moral horizons. Seen in light of theological education, virtue ethics' narrative emphasis squarely places biblical theology at the center of ESEPA's goal to form the character of its students. It offers a way to join together aspects that are often fragmented in theological education.

The concept of character formation within theological education for preparation of Christian leadership cannot be abstracted from the above stated realities. If truth be told, the recent debate over theological education may be a reflection of the fact that within the modern period the biblical narrative has lost its descriptive power, its ability to compel and inspire self-sacrifice and service. Thus, theological educators have sought other means by which to legitimate professional theological study and to provide coherence and direction for theological programs.[87] If virtue ethicists are correct in their analysis of character formation, it follows that ESEPA's professors, administrative staff, and students need to understand and appreciate the formative power and nature of the biblical narrative that gives shape to the

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[85] Quoted in R. Paul Stevens and Michael Green, *Living the Story: Biblical Spirituality for Everyday Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), p. xi.

[86] Ibid.

[87] For an extended commentary on this phenomenon, see David Wells' book, *No Place for Truth Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), especially chapter 6.

seminary's community life and the virtues that sustain it. All need to be vigilant in guarding, promoting, and sustaining community by modeling behavior, attitudes, and dispositions that are consistent with the biblical narrative.

CHAPTER THREE
THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore a theological evaluation of virtue ethics. In the first section on preliminary considerations, we look at two important theological objections to virtue ethics. The question that needs to be answered is whether these objections are significant enough to invalidate the utilization of virtue ethics as a paradigm for Christian character formation. After evaluating these objections, and before examining the essential elements of virtue ethics, we seek to explain why virtue is essential to Christian leadership. As noted in chapter one, leadership experts have recently written concerning the need for leaders to be persons of character. This is a welcome contribution to the field of leadership study that should, if heeded, benefit the general well being of society. Nevertheless, the reason that Christian leaders should be virtuous extends beyond the material and social benefits that virtue brings to the public square. Christian virtue is defined theologically; therefore, our understanding of virtuous Christian leadership must be derived from scripture. After clarifying the need to see the formation of Christian leadership in light of our biblical commitments, we assess the essential elements of virtue ethics by using Richard Hays' three fundamental metaphors of New Testament narrative as a grid. Again, as in the last chapter, an effort is made to outline the significance of each constituent part of virtue ethics for the formation of character within the context of theological education.

Preliminary Considerations

Theological Objections to Virtue Ethics

In order to commend virtue ethics as a grid for the formation of character within an evangelical environment, it is necessary to allow our Christian commitments to augment and amend it according to the biblical narrative and historical theological resources. Where these move in decidedly different directions we are compelled to move as well, modifying or revising as needed. Consequently, the endorsement of virtue ethics as a functioning paradigm of character formation within evangelical theological education should not be taken as tacit approval of the entire system without qualification. It is, however, our contention that the broad contours of virtue ethics correspond significantly with the biblical data and serve as a workable model of character formation.

Two theological objections to virtue ethics call for careful consideration. The first has to do with the apparent lack of emphasis that virtue ethics places on deontology. Scriptural ethics is marked by the use of the imperative mode in which God commands obedience to his word. Since virtue ethics emphasizes other aspects, it appears to give slight notice to the manner in which God addresses humankind. The second issue, and perhaps the more important one, has to do with the interplay between God's grace and human achievement. Given that virtue ethics stresses the ability to attain goodness through habituation, it is feared, with some justification, that virtue ethics is just another name for works-righteousness.

Due to the deontological nature of ethics found in scripture, some have questioned the legitimacy of defining virtue ethics as Christian. God commands; believers respond in humble obedience. There is no other justification needed for righteous behavior other than God, who, as sovereign ruler of the universe, commands obedience to his word. There is no denying that the imperative mode comprises a good portion of biblical ethics and that scriptures underscore the importance of obedience to God's command. The Decalogue is the most prominent example in Old Testament, as is, in the New Testament, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the parenetic material of the epistles. This observation, however, does not necessarily require outright rejection of a biblically informed virtue ethic. Both deontology and growth in virtue appear in the scriptures. There is nothing inherent in the features of virtue ethics, as outlined in the last chapter that necessarily contradicts or devalues a wholehearted command ethic. Rather, they are complementary. As Stassen and Gushee point out, a Christ-centered ethic is strongly deontological. But Christ's commands are "gracious and authoritative instruction concerning *how to do the will of God (deontological) and how to participate in the coming of the kingdom of God (teleological)*."[1] Deontology and teleology serve corresponding functions, and it would be overly simplistic to place two complementary biblical truths in opposition.

Furthermore, biblical deontology can be understood in light of biblical teleology. To submit to God is to recognize his right to rule and command, but it is also to acknowledge that he wills to perfect us in love. For our part,

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[1] Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 121. The emphasis is the author's.

obedience is an act of wisdom; it shapes our attitudes and inclinations, schooling us in virtue. And it anticipates the complete realization of our "adoration and enjoyment of God in perfect righteousness with fullness of joy and love, as our true *telos*."[2] God is not a despot. Although, as the creator of all things he possesses the right to rule and the power to enforce obedience to his commandments, he exercises his authority with wisdom and loving-kindness for our ultimate good. By our willing and loving submission to his commandments, he shapes our character and fulfills the purpose for which he has created us. Unfaltering obedience to God's commandments is indeed our duty; but is at the same time an act of confidence that, in requiring our obedience, God seeks our highest good.

Christian virtue ethics underscores the kind of person who hears God's commands and obeys. It is possible for divine command ethics, with its emphasis on obedience, to be misunderstood as a series of disconnected acts abstracted from the taken-for-granted aspects of daily life and relationships in which individuals manifest what they truly deem important.[3] Virtue ethics, with its emphasis on being, plays an important role in filling out deontological

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[2] J. I. Packer, "The Reconstitution of Authority," Crux 18 (December 1982): 2-12. The emphasis is the author's.

[3] Betty Sichel criticizes Kolberg's analytical approach to moral formation for ignoring the type of person who decides. As she writes, "Moral life is not a series of discordant moral dilemmas requiring extensive thought and the examination of alternative moral judgment and their respective consequences. Morality also must be judged by the quality of ordinary relationships, the intimate relationships between friends and casual meetings with acquaintances, unexpected encounters with strangers, ordinary business dealings, and working with colleagues. These seemingly trivial interchanges are rarely analyzed or questioned. Morality in these cases comes upon one unheralded and requires an instantaneous, intuitive response…These instantaneous actions most often are not even remembered, but they contribute to the moral climate of our lives and communities. Such intuitive, instantaneous action can be traced to the character of the moral agent…." *Moral Education: Character, Community, and Ideals* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 26. As a Christian educator, Craig Dykstra makes similar observations. See his *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg* (New York: Paulist Press 1981), chap. 1.

ethics, curbing any conception of obedience as an impersonal or mechanistic act. As Jonathan Wilson points out,

> Certainly by God's grace we can hear and obey God's command in a moment. But is it not also likely that a person who has previously obeyed God, who has a history of obedience to God, will be more likely to hear and obey? This history, this continuity of character, is that toward which virtue ethics directs our attention.[4]

Virtue ethics, spotlighting, as it does, the type of person who hears and obeys rather than pointing to unconnected episodes of obedience, emphasizes habitual patterns of the Christian behavior within the context of daily life where many small but important decisions are made.

The notion of the type of person who hears and obeys brings into sharper focus the complex interplay between being and doing that appears in scriptures. What we are and what we are becoming give birth to our actions. Actions, in turn, display our essential character. Jesus underscores this dialectical tension when he states, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit….The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him."[5] Closely associated with this horticultural figure of speech is the biblical metaphor of the heart.[6] The heart is the controlling center of our life, our inner being, out of which flow the actions as well as attitudes and intentions that both make up

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[4] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 38.

[5] Matt 12:33, 35; cf. 7:16, 17; Luke 6:43, 44.

[6] The biblical metaphor, heart, is used in scripture to speak of emotions (Acts 2:26; John 16:22), cognition (Matt 12:34; 13:15b; John 12:40b and Acts 28:27b), and volition (2 Cor 9:7; Acts 11:23; 1 Cor 4:5). Taken together, the "heart is supremely the one center in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct." Baumgartel, *TDNT* Vol. III (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 605-613.

and reveal our character as being either good or evil. As Jesus taught his disciples, "It is from within, from men's heart, that come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly."[7] It is imperative to "guard [our] heart, for it is the wellspring of life."[8] In addition, in inaugurating the new covenant through Christ, God promises to renew us by putting his law in our minds and writing it on our hearts.[9] By obedience, a glad and loving submission to the will of God in Christ, we display the renewal of heart and mind that God promised to his people through the prophet Jeremiah. A change of heart leads to a change of behavior. With these qualifications to virtue ethics, there is no inherent reason to pit divine commands against biblical virtue. The choice is not to embrace one to the exclusion of the other, but rather to recognize that both are exhibited throughout the scripture and commended for Christian discipleship.

The second major objection to virtue ethics resides in the fact that the recent resurgence of virtue ethics flows from a distinctively neo-Aristotelian source. As has been noted, Alasdair MacIntyre has made a compelling case for the ascendancy of virtue ethics within modern moral thinking and discourse. His philosophical commitments, however, do not always sit well with Christian thinkers whose faithfulness to the biblical narrative moves them to underscore the moral vitiation of humankind with its need for the unmerited redeeming grace of God in Christ. Virtue ethics emphasizing, as it does, one's

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[7] Mark 7:21-23.
[8] Prov 4:23.
[9] Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10.

ability to acquire moral qualities of goodness through habituation appears to obviate the need for the grace of God. On the surface, virtue ethics is "self-regarding while a truly Christian ethic is focused outside the self."[10] There is an apparent dilemma for those who seek to commend virtue ethics within a decidedly evangelical frame of reference—the call for moral transformation through redemption in Christ is eclipsed by human effort. No one has pointed out this quandary more cogently than Gilbert C. Meilaender when he remarks,

> The virtues are, many have wanted to say, 'good for us.' A sketch of the virtues is a picture of a fulfilled life, of the successful realization of a self. Such an approach cannot without difficulty be incorporated into a vision of the world which has at its center a crucified God—which takes...not self-realization but self-sacrifice as its central theme. Furthermore, the very notion of character seems to suggest—*has* suggested at least since Aristotle—habitual behavior, abilities within our power, an acquired possession. And this in turn may be difficult to reconcile with the Christian emphasis on grace, the sense of the sinner's constant need of forgiveness, and the belief that we can have no claims upon the freedom of God.[11]

Any account of Christian virtue ethics is obliged to give pride of place to the redeeming grace of God in Christ. As Benjamin Farley has noted, biblical virtue begins with a "positive response to God, and to what God has set in motion, rather than preoccupation with mere human achievement."[12] Consequently, the emphasis on the gospel brings to the discussion that which was absent in Greek thought and is lacking in the writings of many modern advocates of virtue ethics—our reliance on God's gracious disposition toward us. It is he who takes the initiative to start us down the pilgrim's road toward

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[10] Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, 144.

[11] Gilbert C. Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), x. Emphasis is the author's.

[12] Benjamin W. Farley, *In Praise of Virtue: An Exploration of the Biblical Virtues in a Christian Context* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 9.

his determinate end; it is also his abiding care and empowerment that sustains us on the journey.[13] Our dependence on God's grace, however, does not eliminate our responsibility to participate in the struggle for transformation. Again, as Jonathan Wilson's states, "Christian *virtue* directs us toward the habitual patterns of the Christian life—enabled by God's grace through the Holy Spirit, to be sure—that witness to the gospel."[14] To respond with our entire being to God's gracious initiative not only glorifies him, but also, through habituation in his grace, transforms our lives by carrying us forward toward the realization of our highest good. Christian virtue is the outcome of a life permeated by the grace of God. Nevertheless, the fear that virtue ethics might lead to a soul-killing works-righteousness is a real concern, although it is not necessary to posit that such will be the case in those who embrace this ethic.[15]

While it is prudent to call attention to the pitfalls of works-righteousness, it is also crucial to guard against an improper understanding of grace. For some, the exaltation of God's grace can lead to an unwarranted passivity.[16] It is right and good to stress, as the Reformers did, that justification by faith secures for us an "alien righteousness" and a new

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[13] Phil 2:13; John 15:5; 2 Pet 1:3-9.

[14] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 35. Phil 2:13; John 15:5; 2 Pet 1:3-9.

[15] It should be noted that such a concern may also true of any ethic or discipleship program that accentuates the need for growth, progress, and the possibility of human effort.

[16] Catholic scholar Peter Kreeft says, "One of the most serious faults in evangelical and fundamentalist ethic is its passivity. Its adherents say, 'The Lord will work it out.' Yes, and meanwhile the Lord has commanded us to act, not just to wait. The Lord is our heavenly Father, and fathers want their children to grow up and think and act for themselves. To insist that we take responsibility for ourselves and cultivate virtue is not to think that we work our way into heaven by piling up Brownie points with God. It is to see us as human beings rather than as wax dummies. It is to interpret the image of God properly (God is active and so are we). It is to see our proper response to God as a full and human one, and to distinguish justification (which is God's alone) from sanctification (which is our and God's). *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 34.

relationship to God. But they also vigorously maintained that a "justification by faith" that does not lead to the good works of sanctification within Christian community and society is an aberrant faith. Nevertheless, in the pedestrian traffic of daily life the lines between justification by faith and sanctification are often blurred. The question of how the two biblical teachings relate to each other in practice is often ambiguous. Thus, an inappropriate emphasis can appear on either side of the equation. On the one hand, the grace that leads to justifying faith may appear to preclude the need for positive moral action. On the other hand, sanctification can be emphasized in such a way that the grace of God is understood only in terms of initial conversion and justification, as if these were solely an entry phase into the Christian life, which then gives way to an individual's unaided personal effort. When distorted, either emphasis disfigures and enfeebles the biblical teaching on virtue.

It has long been observed that the redemptive acts of God precede his call to moral transformation, giving witness to the priority of grace. For example, God delivered Israel from their Egyptian overlords before he gave them the law. The claim to obedience that the Decalogue places upon Israel proceeds from God's prior initiative to save. The same pattern appears in the New Testament where *kerygma* precedes parenesis. Jesus' call to repentance and faith follows his announcement of the good news that in his person the long-awaited rule of God has arrived. Mark 1:15 records that in the beginning of Jesus' ministry he proclaimed, "The time has come, the kingdom of God in near. Repent and believe the good news!" The arrival of God's dynamic rule in

Jesus makes possible the call to moral action. In order to give expression to this fact, scholars have pressed into use the distinction between verbal modes of the *indicative* and the *imperative*. In general terms, the indicative expresses what God in Christ has done for us in order to secure salvation. As a result, he has altered our status from former enemies into reconciled sons and daughters.[17] As God's reconciled children, the imperative serves to give concrete expression to our new existence in Christ. The call to obedience and spiritual growth is, in one sense, the call to bear with dignity the family likeness.[18] God's redemptive initiative, however, is not only the basis for the imperative; it is also the promise of divine enablement. George Ladd puts it succinctly when he writes that those who by faith enter the kingdom of God "are not only placed under the ethical demand of the reign of God, but by virtue of this very experience of God's reign are also enabled to realize a new measure of righteousness." [19]

Although the indicative and the imperative are not identical, they are as inseparable as two sides of the same coin. The imperative is not simply an option that believers may take up or leave aside at their discretion; rather, it is an integral component of the indicative. In Christ, new life has been given.

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[17] Rom 5:10-11.

[18] Herman Ridderbos, commenting on Matthew 5: 44-48, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven….Be perfect…as your heavenly Father is perfect." says, "It is clear…that sonship is not to be considered here as a future goal but as a present state. So, loving the enemy is evidence of the communion in which the disciples live with their heavenly Father. Sonship to God (a gift of the kingdom) thus appears also to have a moral meaning. From this side also 'the priority of the divine work' is expressed in the obedience of the disciples to do God's will. Sonship to God is a gift of the fulfillment accomplished in Christ, and is not only a new redeemed relationship but also 'a communion of will' with God." *The Coming of the Kingdom* (St. Catharine, Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press, 1978), 250.

[19] George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 128.

Obedience does not precede the gift of new life as a condition to receive it, nor does it follow as a secondary result of lesser importance; rather, it is a "constitutive part of that new life."[20] Therefore, we see in the New Testament epistles, especially in Paul's, multiple metaphors to communicate a lifestyle that is congruent with new life in Christ. In Romans chapter six, for example, the rite of baptism serves to illustrate that believers have died to sin in order to live a new life.[21] Just as Christ died and was raised from the dead, believers also have died to sin and have been raised in newness of life. Based on this new reality, Paul exhorts the believers in Rome to "not let sin reign in [their] mortal bodies" but to offer their bodies as "instruments of righteousness."[22] The New Testament authors do not speak of Christian virtue as if it were a detached human achievement set apart from the grace of God. The indicative forms the basis of their exhortation. Thus, Paul can describe the believers in Colossae, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."[23]

When the indicative is uncoupled from the imperative, the essential link between saving grace and enabling grace is severed. According to Simon Chan, Protestants historically have understood the grace of God in terms of divine favor that fosters a new relationship with God; they have given less

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[20] Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 226.

[21] In our opinion, the term "mystical union" that has been pressed into service in order to get at the apostle's meaning obscures as much as it enlightens, since the polyvalent nature of the word "mystical" requires too many qualifications in order to be practical.

[22] Rom 6:12-13.

[23] Col 3:12; The close relationship between the indicative and imperative is accentuated in the epistles of Paul by his use of the inferential particle "therefore" ($o\mathring{v}\nu$) and the adverb "thus" ($o\mathring{v}\tau\omega$), both of which in a given context may function to denote that what they introduce is the result of what precedes. In many cases $o\mathring{v}\nu$ and $o\mathring{v}\tau\omega$ indicate a shift from didactic to distinctively parenetic material. (Rom 6:1-12; cf. 1 Thess 4:1; Gal 5:1; Eph 4:1; Col 3:1, 5).

attention to the development of a program to acquire virtue and to eradicate specific vices. Conversely, Roman Catholics have tended to view the Christian life in terms of the cultivation of virtues which necessitates suitable instruction and the development of appropriate skills.[24] These two features of God's grace are not mutually exclusive categories but rather different aspects of the same reality. The former accentuates the grace of God as divine favor, while the latter draws attention to the grace of God as divine enablement. God's grace as his favor is an act of his unmerited generosity toward the undeserving; God's grace as his enablement is the empowering presence of his Spirit that makes possible the life of virtue and service.[25] These two aspects of grace must be tightly held together. Simon Chan has pointed out,

> Surely grace can be seen as both a favor and an infused quality in the soul....We need a concept of grace as *God's* unmerited favor to undeserving sinners or the cultivation of virtues will be reduce to mere moralism....On the other hand, grace must also be understood as an empowering gift, or we cannot hope to develop any meaningful human response....[26]

The grace that saves is also the grace that enables believers to faithfully respond to God's bold initiative in Christ that eventuates in the transformation of character. Virtue ethics needs to be reinterpreted in light of

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[24] Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology,* 97.

[25] James Dunn has underscored the importance of understanding these two aspects of the grace of God. As he notes, "Grace is a dynamic concept—the act of God for, in, and through man. Where it describes the act of God in and through men it overlaps with the concepts 'power' and 'Spirit.' Indeed, it is often more or less synonymous with these terms and shares with them the character of being concepts of experience…. 'The grace of God in Christ' (Rom 5:15; Gal 2:21; Eph 1:6f.) denotes both the historical event of Christ's death and resurrection, and the experience of grace in the here and now. So too the grace of Paul's conversion is not something different from the continuing grace outworking through his present ministry (1 Cor 15:10); as Paul's conversion was not something different from his call, so the grace which transformed him was not something different from the grace 'working with him.'…*All grace, including its particular manifestations, is the one grace of God*." *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 204. The emphasis is the author's.

[26] Chan, *Spiritual Theology,* 83. Emphasis is the author's.

biblical narrative, which, in this case, means keeping together the saving and enabling grace of God. As the apostle Paul writes in Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches (trains[27]) us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age." Christian virtue, then, is not the achievement of heroic unaided human activity, but rather the realization of God's redemptive purposes through his enabling grace.

<div align="center">Why Virtue is Essential to Christian Leadership</div>

In chapter one, we briefly mentioned the reasons why virtue is indispensable for leadership. Our concern here is to rehearse salient theological reasons that support that assertion. We begin with a few general observations. First, as creatures created in the image of God there is woven into the fabric of our existence a sense that we are moral beings. Although through the Fall the image of God was sullied, it was never eradicated. There lingers in every heart "'signals of transcendence'… that human beings are anchored in a moral world."[28] To deny or ignore this truth is to be cut loose from the moorings that give substance to our lives and that promote a consciousness of God's greatness and a vision of human dignity and happiness. To be renewed in the image of our creator is to see ourselves as moral beings that reach our full potential by growing ever more deeply in the goodness and holiness of God.

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[27] $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$, which translated here as "teach," also carries the meaning "to train." See Barclay N. Newman, Jr., *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), s.v. $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omega$.

[28] David Wells, *Losing our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover it Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 148.

The second observation is closely related to the first. The biblical writers clearly expect all believers to grow in virtue, since all, by the gift of God's grace, have been called to holiness.[29] The process by which this takes place is neither automatic nor trouble-free. It is, as Neuhaus describes it, "a painstaking process of becoming who, in Christ, we already are."[30] As members of the community of faith, Christian leaders are not exempt from this process, nor should they desire to be. Christian leaders *qua* Christians, like the other members of the community of faith, are called to a virtuous life which moves them toward the full restoration of the image of God in Christ. This truth underscores the necessity of giving full weight to the descriptive adjective "Christian" in terms of Christian leadership. No matter what managerial skills one may possess, or what ability one may have to cast vision and to inspire others to follow, Christian leaders are called as human beings and as believers to reflect the goodness and holiness of God in whose image they were created and in whose image they are now in the process of being renewed.

While all believers are to grow in virtue, particular weight is placed on the shoulders of leaders to be men and women of good character. The reason for this is clear: within the community of faith, for good or ill, leaders are role models. Whether or not they desire it, leaders cannot escape this fact; their location in the community places them in a position to be imitated. Thus, through their words, attitudes, and actions Christian leaders serve the

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[29] 1 Thess 4:7; cf. Lev 11:44; 2 Cor 7:1; Heb 12:14; I Pet. 1:15.
[30] Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 90.

community of faith by displaying what it means to follow Christ. For the New Testament writers, this essential aspect of church leadership is seen in their double concern for leaders to be an example to the flock and for church members to pattern their lives after the example of their leaders.[31] Accordingly, the apostle Paul exhorts his readers to imitate his example of following Christ.[32] Indeed, as circumstances dictated, he was willing to remind believers of his good conduct in order to demonstrate the purity of his motives and to give evidence of his desire to please God.[33] Moreover, when he was unable to be personally present with a congregation, he would send his colleague, Timothy, as his emissary to remind believers of his way of life in Christ Jesus. Even to his closest associates, when they found themselves in difficult ministry situations, Paul would put forward his pattern of life and ministry as a way to exhort them to continue on with courage and faithfulness.[34]

Of course, Christian leaders can model behavior that is unbecoming to the gospel, leading others astray. Scriptures reserve the severest criticisms for those leaders who play false with their charge and whose lifestyles lead the people of God into doctrinal error and moral laxity. Malachi, for instance, excoriates the leaders of Israel because they "turned from the way and by [their] teaching had caused many to stumble." Therefore, the Lord would cause them "to be despised and humiliated before all the people."[35] In like

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[31] 1 Pet 5:3, Heb 13:7.
[32] 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1.
[33] 1 Thess 2:1-12; Acts 20:17-21, 32-35.
[34] 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 3:10-14.
[35] Mal 2:8-9; cf. 1:6-2:7.

fashion, Isaiah, in order to awaken the leaders of Israel to the seriousness of the judgment that awaited them, took on the role of a prosecuting attorney. Speaking on behalf of the Lord, he charged Israel's feckless leaders with their high crimes: "The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: 'It is you who have ruined my vineyard.'"[36] Jesus, too, reserved his fiercest condemnation for the religious leaders of Israel, whom he called snakes and vipers who would not escape condemnation.[37] The quality of a Christian leader's work will one day be tested by the fire of judgment, and all that does not pass the test will be consumed.[38] These are difficult warnings. Nevertheless, Christian leaders and the community of faith must hear them and give them serious consideration.

The expectation that Christian leaders will live exemplary lives is plainly laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. To desire a position of leadership within the community of faith is a noble aspiration, but since leaders are entrusted with God's work, they must be men and women of good character. The list of virtues supplied by Paul in these passages is the same as those found in Greco-Roman society.[39] In the context of the Ephesian congregation, it is probable that the apostle Paul finds it necessary to reiterate the virtues of non-Christian Romans and Greeks because some elders in Ephesus have sullied their reputation and have brought disrepute on the gospel among those outside the church. Using "pagan morality as a baseline below which it

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[36] Isa. 3:12-15; cf. 9:14-16; Jer 23:9-32; Ezek 34:1-10.
[37] Matt 23; Mark 12:38-39.
[38] 1 Cor 4:10-15; cf. Jas 3:1.
[39] Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 5ff. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 213.

is unthinkable that Christians should fall,"[40] Paul addresses the need to replace erring elders with others who are beyond reproach and have a good reputation outside the congregation. Hence the qualification, "blameless," in 1 Timothy 3:2 has to do with "irreproachable *observable* conduct."[41] The qualification, "a good reputation with outsiders," in verse 7 joins with the qualification in verse two and forms a bracket around the other virtues; it also discloses Paul's urgency in writing.[42]

It also noteworthy that the lists of virtues found in the Pastoral Epistles are not exhaustive, reflecting as they do the ad hoc nature of New Testament letters. Indeed, conspicuously absent from these lists is the mention of those virtues that are more prominently displayed in other Pauline letters such as faith, hope, and love.[43] Not that these virtues are unimportant for Christian leaders; much to the contrary. Paul's concern has to do with correcting a situation in which church leaders are teaching aberrant doctrines and whose

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[40] Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy,* 224.

[41] Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984), 43. Emphasis is the author's.

[42] According to Fee, the letter to Titus displays the same concern for the reputation of the church with outsiders. In the case of Titus, the focus is on the church as the people of God in the world rather than on false teachers as such. According to Fee, "The letter…may be termed both *prophylactic*…and *evangelistic*…in it thrust. Thus, the matter of appointing elders in 1:5-9 has a clear prophylactic concern vis-à-vis the threat of error (1:10-16; cr. 3:9-11). But it also carries with it a concern for the reputation of the gospel in the world (1:6 and 3:8). The dominant theme in Titus, therefore, is *good works* (1:8, 16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), that is, exemplary Christian behavior, and that *for the sake of outsiders* (2:5, 7, 8, 10, 11; 3:1, 8)." Ibid., xxiv. Emphasis is the author's.

[43] This fact has been used as evidence against the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. As an example, Hays argues, "The characteristic Pauline themes of freedom, suffering with Christ, costly love for the sake of the community, and living in the creative tension between the ages have been drastically deemphasized, if not entirely abandoned. In their place we find the modest, mundane virtues of orderly household." Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation--A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publisher, 1996), 70. For an opposing view see Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus,* xxvi-xxxii.

lifestyles discredit the gospel. Accordingly, he only records those virtues that are germane to the situation he addresses in Ephesus. [44]

The apostle Paul enumerates the characteristics he deemed important for Christian leaders. We can group these characteristics in the following manner:[45]

➢ With regard to the leader's person, he should be temperate, self-controlled, not a slave to drink,[46] and not a lover of money. In order to avoid the temptation to overweening pride, not be a recent convert.

➢ With regard to the leader's family, he must be faithful to his marriage, and since the ability to fulfill his responsibility in the congregation is reflected in his family life, he must manage his own household well, applying appropriate discipline to his own children.

➢ With regard to others, whether congregants our outsiders, the leader must be respectable, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and have a good reputation with those outside the church.

➢ Concerning the leader's function within the congregation, only two requirements are stated: giving hospitality, and possessing the ability to

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[44] Fee argues that in these letters Paul seeks to intervene through his representatives, Timothy and Titus, in a situation in which he needed to reiterate the character qualities that church leaders must possess. According to him, the key to understanding the occasion of 1 and 2 Timothy lies in 1 Timothy 1:3 where he reminds his colleague that he had left him in Ephesus to "command certain men not to teach false doctrines." (1 Tim 1:3). As it turns out, these "certain men" were elders in the church (1:3, 7; 6:3). Their bad character is evident in their argumentative spirit (1:3-7; 6:3-5), their greed (6:6-10) and their taking advantage of young widows in the church, among whom they have found a receptive audience (2:9-15; 5:3-16). Fee also suggests that the apostle Paul had foreseen this defection and warned the leaders of the church when he met with them on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:30). Read in this light, the qualifications for elders and deacons are given in order to resist those who had defected and to outline the criteria to replace them with new elders. Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus: A Good News Commentary,* xv-xl.

[45] For this division of the virtues we are indebted to Andrew Seidel's work, *Charting a Bold Course* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2003), 122-124.

[46] This is Kelly's translation of the word πάροινος. J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1981), 77.

teach sound doctrine. As Titus puts it, an elder "must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (1:9).

Luke Timothy Johnson sums up his comments on 1 Timothy 3:1-7 by pointing out that the virtues expected of an elder are "ameliorative moral qualities that mitigate against any hint of arbitrary or harsh uses of power." As he puts it:

> [To] be sober and not a lover of wine means that the supervisor is not corrupted by pleasure, and his judgments are not affected by crass addictions. To be nonviolent and not given to battle means that the leader is not corrupted by envy and vainglory and is able to cultivate cooperation rather than competition, foment peace rather than conflict. Not to be a lover of money means that the leader is not corrupted by avarice and thus is able to place the community's interests before his own. Likewise, the virtues of prudence and reasonableness point to a leader who applies the best qualities of mind and character to decision making.[47]

The virtues listed in the Pastorals are not necessarily the most stirring qualities that are sought in Christian leaders, especially in a society that places pragmatism, personality, or celebrity above character. But they are absolutely indispensable for those who serve in positions of leadership and should be taken seriously by all—those serving in leadership, potential candidates for church leadership, and members of the congregation. A leader's ability to organize the community, to set and achieve goals, to manage budgets, to preach and teach, and to be relational are good and needed abilities; but they are, at best, complimentary qualities when considering the selection of those who lead the community of faith.

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[47] Johnson, *First and Second Letters to Timothy,* 224.

A Biblical Virtue Ethic

Narrative

As we have noted, the stories that make up our grand narrative provide a cognitive map that directs us in our efforts to perceive and relate to the world; they give us a way to make sense out of the details of our lives and help us to discern the priorities that should guide us. Meta-narratives possess the capacity to amend and deepen our self-understanding and, as such, they possess the power to change our lives in significant ways. The Christian community has long recognized that the revelation of God given in scriptures primarily comes to us in the form of a narrative that recounts God's redemptive engagement with the world. Notwithstanding the different genres and subplots found in the scriptures, there is an overarching plotline—a beginning, middle, and an end—that moves from Genesis to Revelation.

To say that the Bible is narrative appears only to state the obvious. Nonetheless, in the history of modern theology this simple fact has not always been appreciated. In recent years there has been a renaissance of narrative theology that developed momentum in the nineteen seventies when Hans Frei[48] demonstrated how the hermeneutics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had effectively "eclipsed" biblical narrative. The hermeneutics of the Enlightenment dismissed biblical narrative as either a compilation of stories that serve to illustrate deeper universal truth that needs to be extracted from

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[48] Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). Predating Frei's work, H. Richard Niebuhr wrestled with the narrative meaning of Scriptures. In his work, *The Meaning of Revelation*, he distinguished critical historicism from biblical history by conceptualizing the former as "external history" subject to the criteria of critical analysis; the latter he termed "internal history" that is not objectively verifiable, but nevertheless carries value and worth for the self. "The Story of Our Life," from his *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1941), 43-81.

the text, or as myth that expresses the ineffable actions of God intended to comfort the reader. As a consequence, the narrative nature of the Bible was effectively ignored. More recently, scholars across a broad spectrum of theological disciplines and persuasions have once again embraced biblical narrative and have made extensive use of it in their works on Christian ethics and systematic theology.[49] Instead of extracting from the biblical narrative timeless universal principals, these theologians have maintained that "the Bible's ethical teachings are embedded within that narrative and are understandable only in the context of the biblical story."[50] Accordingly, they seek to expound their conception of ethics in light of the scriptural plotline with its major motifs such as creation, covenant, kingdom, cross, and eschatology.

Understanding the Bible as narrative gives us a rich palate from which to paint a picture of virtue. Indeed, the various literary genres and theological themes that make up the biblical text give us an impressive number of options for exploring the nexus between narrative, character, and leadership. It is not possible, however, in the scope of this work to explore all the potential texts that might confirm a discernable link between narrative and character. Therefore, it is necessary to form a synthesis of the biblical data that brings

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[49] In addition to the works already mentioned, see also Stanley Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997; Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation—A contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996); James McClendon, Jr., *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002); Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. & Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1997), 36-80; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), See esp. 93-97.

[50] Grenz, *The Moral Quest,* 96.

together a vast amount of material into a discernible pattern. Various

theologians have suggested such a synthesis. James McClendon, Jr. has

offered three motifs as a way to organize the biblical material. They are *The*

Way—a God-given road or journey, *Watch-Care*—an awareness of fellow

travelers on the way who need nurture in their own journey, and the divine

gift of *Witness* to those not (yet) on the way.[51] McClendon expands the

meaning of each of these motifs: *the Way* is the eschatological reality he calls

The Easter Procession, or, "the Easter raising, and Pentecost its spiritual

flowering."[52] *Watch-Care* is the *Community of Care* which is a social reality

that eschews the "private interiorization" of the faith.[53] *Witness* he further

defines as an *Embodied Witness* that "stresses the organic existence of the

Christian community."[54]

In his work, *Spiritual Theology*, Simon Chan, who shows a deep

appreciation for the narrative structure of the scripture, uses the classic

protestant grid of systematic theology—*justification, sanctification*, and

glorification—as an organizing principle.[55] Also, Glen Stassen and David

Gushee put forward the Kingdom of God as their organizing principle.[56]

Richard Hays advocates a synthesis organized around three metaphors that

serve as "fundamental images." These images enable us to identify "common

elements present in different types of discourse."[57] As "root metaphors

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[51] McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 49.
[52] Ibid., 76,77. Emphasis is the author's.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Chan, *Spiritual Theology,* 75-101.
[56] Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics,* chaps. 1-3.
[57] Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament,* 194.

embedded in the New Testament texts they encapsulate the crucial elements of the narrative and serve to focus our attention on the common ground shared by the various witnesses."[58] The images that Hays proposes are *Community*, *Cross*, and *New Creation. Community* accentuates God's purpose to fashion a covenant people, drawing attention to the essential continuity between Israel and the church. The *Cross* of Christ is "the climax and pivot-point of the eschatological drama,"[59] while the *New Creation* points to the eschatological reality that the church lives in between the time of the inauguration of the kingdom of God and the denouement in which he will fully redeem his creation. These "images are to be understood within a plot; they figure forth the story of God's saving action in the world."[60]

While all these proposals have their merit, we intend to employ Hays's fundamental images as a way to reflect upon how the biblical narrative shapes a distinctive understanding of Christian character and how it might shape the practice of leadership development through theological education.[61] As a synopsis of New Testament narrative, his fundamental images are similar to the features of virtue ethics, especially *telos*, community, and virtue. [62] In the exposition below we will follow Hays' order of *Community, Cross, and New Creation*, recognizing that his images overlap at many points. Although much

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 199.

[60] Ibid.

[61] The use of Hays's fundamental images as a template to explore the virtues of Christian leadership has also been used by William Willimon in his excellent work, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

[62] Of course, our use of Hays's images does not mean that he would agree with us or the conclusions we reach. We are only suggesting that his work provides a template to consider the features of the New Testament narrative and its nexus with virtue ethics and the formation of godly leaders.

can be said about each image, our exposition will focus on drawing out, as much as possible, the implications these hold for leadership development and theological education.

<center>Community</center>

The virtuous life is life lived in community. Character formation is as much a product of community as it is of personal responsibility and the determination to live by the standards of community. The cognitive framework by which we come to understand our life is mediated to us through the community in which we participate, as is our conception of the common good, traditions of virtue, and the ultimate meaning of life. In community, character is formed through shared projects, mutual activities, and close relationships. While each individual is responsible to live a virtuous life, virtue is always communitarian. Admittedly, there is a dialectical relationship between community and personal virtue. Both influence the development of the other, and both are needed in order to sustain the other. In addition, communities set boundaries that confirm its membership, requiring members to embrace its goals and purposes and to avoid behaviors and attitudes that work against its well-being. On the positive side, group membership means the willing acceptance of the community's ideals and formation of *habitus* that moves toward the realization of its *telos*.[63] On the negative side, when members deviate from the purpose of the group through behavior and

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[63] The emphasis on the willing participation of members to live in accordance with the goals and purposes of their community is of utmost importance. A legalistic coercion that demands blind obedience undercuts the virtue shaping nature of obedience. This holds true whether such coercion arises from the demands of a religious community or the pressure to realize the ideals of democratic liberal society. Only those who willingly and freely participate in the community's story are able to follow it. See Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* 150; cf. Hunter, *The Death of Character,* 16.

attitudes that work against its well-being,[64] disapproval is expressed, the severity of which depends on the gravity of the offence.

Scripture also emphasizes the crucial nexus between community and Christian virtue. While our pilgrimage involves personal faith, lusory attitude, and appropriate actions, our act of believing is never private. To believe in the gospel is to be initiated by the Spirit into the body of Christ.[65] It is a community whose unity transcends racial, social, and gender distinctions.[66] The idea of a solitary individual Christian disassociated from active participation in the community of faith is, within the context of the New Testament, a contradiction of terms. Moving beyond the intramural sparring of the past, Cyprian of Carthage clearly captured the scriptural teaching on community when he wrote *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, outside the church there is no salvation.[67] Indeed, the New Testament rites of baptism and the Eucharist serve as signs of the church's communal nature: the former celebrates our initiation into the community, while the latter celebrates the sweep of redemptive history in Christ as the basis of our unity.[68] Despite the fact that modern Western ethics has nearly apotheosized the heroic individual, who must be free from community and its traditions in order to be truly moral, biblical morality is always communal. Without an intentional

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[64] Hauerwas points out the logic that lies behind a willing acceptance of the prohibitions placed upon the members of the community. "[C]ertain prohibitions of a community are such that to violate them means that one is no longer leading one's life in terms of the narrative that forms that community's understanding of its basic purpose." *The Peaceable Kingdom,* 119.

[65] 1 Cor 12:13.

[66] Gal 3:26-29.

[67] Quoted by McClendon, *Ethics*, 165.

[68] 1 Cor 10:15-17; 11:23-32; 12:13; Eph 4:4-5.

participation in the community of faith, the formation of Christian character remains unattainable.

The theme of community runs throughout the biblical narrative. From the opening chapters of Genesis where God declared that it was not good for man to be alone, to the closing chapters of the book of Revelation where multitudes exult in the presence of God, the drama of redemption is communitarian. Woven into the fabric of every major biblical theme—creation, fall, covenant, kingdom, etc.—is an explicit or implicit understanding of community. In fact, the *telos* of the biblical narrative envisions the restoration of community as God originally designed it. As Grenz puts it, "God's program is directed to the bringing into being of a community in the highest sense—a reconciled people, living within a renewed creation, and enjoying the presence of their Redeemer."[69] Moreover, God's design has always been to call into existence a people zealous for good works: a community of character that would reflect his goodness.[70] Through it social practices, rites, and symbols the community of faith form a people who embody and enact the biblical drama.

Theologically, God as a triune being forms the standard for human community in general and the believing community in particular. The idea of God as a "social Trinity" underscores the nature of the Trinity as persons-in-relationship.[71] The term *perichoresis* is used to point to the interrelationship of the members of the Trinity and serves as a paradigm of human

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[69] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 24.
[70] Duet. 7:6, 14:2, 26:19; cf. Titus 2:14.
[71] Grenz, *The Moral Quest,* 263.

relationships in community.[72] Thus, as those created in the image of God, community is an essential characteristic of what it means to be fully human. As Grenz states,

> Insofar as God is the ultimate model and standard for humankind, the essential nature of God forms the paradigm for the life of the Christian and of the Christian community (Matt. 10:39). At the heart of the Christian understanding of God is the declaration that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. This means that in his eternal essence the one God is a social reality, the social Trinity. Because God is the social Trinity, a plurality in unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons, but on persons-in-community.[73]

Biblical salvation encompasses the restoration of believers to the image of God which means, among other things, life in community. We can further extrapolate from the Trinitarian idea of God that as a triune being, in whose image we are created, the attributes that typify his nature, such as love, purity, holiness, justice, and longsuffering, are communal and are key qualities that the members of the community of faith are to possess in order experience their full human potential.

The New Testament writers employ multiple metaphors to describe the church's communal nature. The church is a city set on a hill,[74] the bride of Christ,[75] a family in which God is "Abba" and believers share familial relationships.[76] The members of the community of faith are referred to as

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[72] Chan, *Spiritual Theology,* 45. Chan outlines implication of a Trinitarian model by pointing to the different functions of the Trinity. The Father is creator of all things; the Son is savior and liberator, and the Spirit brings miraculous empowerment to live out the gift of new life in Christ. 46-47.

[73] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 76.

[74] Matt 5:14.

[75] Rev 19:7; cf. Eph 5:22-33.

[76] According to Banks, the metaphor of a household or family is Paul's characteristic way of referring to the church. "More than any of the other images utilized by Paul, it reveals the essence of his thinking on community." He argues that the frequent use of terms brothers and sisters denotes the

"saints," those who are chosen and redeemed and given the charge to fulfill God's purposes in the world.[77] The community of faith is the people of God who stand in continuity with Israel. The New Covenant that was inaugurated by the death of Christ has made all who believe, Jew and non-Jew alike, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.[78] These New Testament metaphors illuminate different facets of life within the community of faith.

The community of faith is a charismatic community, for it is created and formed by the Holy Spirit.[79] The apostle Paul speaks of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where the presence of God dwells. [80] Elsewhere, he employs the vivid metaphor of a human body to illustrate the unity that believers share in Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit.[81] In book of Ephesians, the apostle explains how, through Christ's death, God has overcome the prejudice of both the Jews and the Gentiles in order to make them "one new man" in Christ.[82] He commands his readers to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit."[83] The same emphasis of keeping unity through the Spirit is found in 1 Corinthians 12. Unity is based on the reality that all

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members of a family in which God is father and believers are his adopted sons and daughters through Christ. Robert Banks, *Paul Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1980), 54.

[77] Exod 19:5-6.

[78] 1 Pet 2:9.

[79] Gordon Fee states, "The people of God as a community of believers owe their existence to their common, lavish experience of the Spirit…. Created and formed *by* the Spirit, the early communities thus became a fellowship *of* the Spirit…. In the Trinitarian benediction of 2 Cor 13:13[14], Paul selects κοινωνία to characterize the ministry of the Spirit. Although this refers chiefly to 'a participation in the Spirit himself,' such participation is common to them all and thus also includes the 'fellowship' created and sustained by the Spirit." *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publisher, Inc., 1994), 872. Emphasis is the author's.

[80] 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21-22.

[81] Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4:1-16.

[82] Eph 2:15.

[83] Eph 4:3-4.

believers, no matter what their ethnic or social background, have been

"baptized by one Spirit into one body" and all have been "given the one Spirit

to drink."[84] Hence, like a healthily functioning body, in which all its parts

make up constitutive aspects of the whole, so also are the members of the

community of faith. No one part can claim any independent importance nor

can one part reject the other parts of the body and function in isolation. While

there is diversity of parts, all are needed and work together for a common

good.[85] Consequently, the apostle Paul stresses that in Christ we are

"members of one another."[86]

The importance of community for the formation of character is clearly

seen by Paul's use of the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων. Commenting on the

Spirit's role in creating the people of God, Fee says,

> *Everything* is done ἀλλήλων. They are members of *one another* (Rom
> 12:5; Eph 4:25)*,* who are to build up *one another* (1 Thess 5:11; Rom
> 14:19), to care for one another (1 Cor 12:25), to love *one another* (1
> Thess 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess 1:3; Rom 13:8), to pursue *one another's* good
> (1 Thess 5:15), to bear with *one another* in love (Eph 4:2), to bear *one
> another's* burdens (Gal 6:2); to be kind and compassionate to *one
> another*, forgiving *one another* (Eph 4:32; cf. Col 3:13), to submit to
> *one another* (Eph 5:21), to consider *one another* better than ourselves
> (Phil 2:3; cf. Rom 12:10), to be devoted to *one another* in love (Rom
> 12:10), to live in harmony with *one another* (Rom 12:16). Thus, God is
> not just saving individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather, he is
> creating *a people* for his name, among whom God can dwell and who in
> their life together will reproduce God's life and character.[87]

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[84] 1 Cor 12:13.

[85] 1 Cor 12:7. As Banks writes, "God has designed things that the involvement of every
person with his special contribution is necessary for the proper functioning of the community…This
means that each member has a unique role to play, yet is also dependent upon everyone else." *Paul's
Idea of Community*, 64.

[86] Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25.

[87] Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 871-872. The emphasis is the author's.

With such overwhelming biblical evidence for the importance of community, it can be seen that spiritual formation becomes malformation when it centers in on the individual Christian without reference to the community of faith. In Romans chapter 12, Paul makes an explicit connection between the transformation of character and community. Believers who once presented their "bodies in slavery to impurity" are now to present them "as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is their spiritual worship." [88] This self-giving action on the part of community of faith is clarified[89] in verse two as avoiding conformity to this age and being transformed by the renewing of the mind, that is, "the 'renewal' of one's whole character ."[90] This renewal of character, however, is not a one-time event; it is, rather, a lifelong process.[91] This, Paul says, is the acceptable form of corporate worship that leads to the proper discerning of God's will.[92]

In the exegesis of verses 1 and 2, Richard Hays brings out the communal feature of Christian moral transformation. While it is quite common to think of the transformation of mind in Romans 12 as a phenomenon that takes place among isolated believers, it is, in point of fact,

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[88] Rom 6:19, $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\hat{\eta}\sigma\alpha\iota$ is used as a technical term in the language of sacrifice, thus "to offer" or "to present." *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature,* 2nd ed., s.v. "$\pi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$."

[89] The interpretation understands the introductory $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$ as epexegetical. See Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 101.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Charles E. B. Cranfield states it is a processes in which believers are to allow themselves "to be transformed continually, remoulded, remade, so that his life here and now may more and more clearly exhibit signs and tokens of the coming order of God, that order which has already come—in Christ." *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 296-297.

[92] "The metaphor of 'living sacrifice' describes the vocation of the community: the addressees of the letter are called to present their bodies together as a single collective sacrifice of obedience to God. This act of rightful worship must be performed by the community as a whole." *Moral Vision,* 36.

an act that encompasses the entire community of faith.[93] This being the case,

the emphasis on corporate self-giving in verses 1 and 2 merges seamlessly into

the body metaphor employed in verses 3 through 8. This is an important link:

a corporate renovation of mind that does not lead to self-giving service within

the community of faith is oxymoronic; it lacks the all important qualification

of non-conformity to the world that has curved in on itself. In this passage,

the character formation envisioned is one in which each member of the body

of Christ serves the community through the *charismata* they have received.

For our purposes, it is essential to note that leadership, along with the gifts of

prophesy, service, teaching, encouragement, generous giving, and mercy, is

one of the *charismata* that serves the community of faith, and it should be

exercised according to the gracious enablement and faith that one has

received. [94]

In verse 3, Paul prefaces his comments on the *charismata* with the

exhortation for believers not to think more highly of themselves than they

ought; rather, they are to think of themselves with sober judgment. Beginning

with verse 9, Paul catalogues the virtues that sustain this sober judgment

within the community.

> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be
> devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above
> yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor,

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[93] To quote Hays, "The 'community' more adequately connotes the corporate participatory character of the people of God in Christ. Many New Testament texts express different facets of this image…The coherence of the New Testament's ethical mandate will come into focus only when we understand that mandate in *ecclesial* terms, when we seek God's will not by asking first, 'What should *I* do,' but 'What should *we* do?'" Ibid., 196-197. The emphasis is the author's.
[94] The charismatic feature of leadership is also found in 1 Cor 12:27-30 and Eph 4:11-13.

serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.[95]

As much as it is possible, they are to live in peace with everyone. They are not to take vengeance, but allow the Lord to put accounts right.[96] In the context of chapter twelve, the behaviors and attitudes pictured in verses 9 through 21 follow as a consequence of the corporate renewal of mind found in verses 1 and 2. They also spell out the conduct and mind-set that allow the *charismata* in verses 3 to 8 to be exercised appropriately.[97] In terms of leadership as one of the *charismata* given to the community faith, the manner in which a leader is to diligently discharge his service is characterized by the virtues listed in verses 9 to 21.

The distinctive nature of Christian leadership flows from the community it is called to serve. It is obvious from what has been stated above that the community envisioned by the biblical narrative often stands in contradistinction to the community envisioned by neo-Aristotelian or modern communitarian ethics. The New Testament pictures the church as an alternative society. The meta-narrative that gives shape to its existence challenges the narratives that permeate secular society and gives plausibility to a cognitive framework that dismisses, minimizes, or disallows redemption through Christ. Since this is the case, believers must be ready to live in

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[95] Rom 12:9-13.

[96] Rom12:14-21.

[97] Other lists of virtues and vices that appear in the New Testament follow much of the same pattern found in Romans chapter 12. In Colossians chapter 3, for instance, Paul reasons that since believers as the new community that God has brought into existence through Christ's death and resurrection, they "have been raised with Christ" and as a consequence they are to "set [their] minds on things above and not on earthly things." Therefore, they are to avoid such vices as "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed." Using language reminiscent of Israel, they are, as "God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved," to clothe themselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." vv. 1-12 cf. Eph 4:20-5:2.

creative tension with the world as those who are in it but not of it.[98] The

Apostle Paul alludes to the distinction between the church and world when he

writes, "[O]ur citizenship is in heaven;" that is, the church is a "colony of

heaven."[99] A colony is a company of persons who sojourn in a foreign city or

country, speak the same language, and take pleasure in their mutual cultural

heritage. It is a place where the history of the homeland, with its stories of

heroes and it values, is reiterated and passed on to the young; it is a place

where the distinctive language and lifestyle of resident aliens are nurtured

and reinforced. By the use of this metaphor, Paul underscores the truth that

"[t]he church exists today as resident aliens, an adventurous colony in a

society of unbelief."[100]

    While the apostle Paul pictures the community of faith as a colony, it

would be a mistake to understand his use of this metaphor as a call for the

church to become insular. As a colony of heaven, the church serves the world

by being a community of witness and invitation. Through its communal life it

seeks to display in the present the life the future. In so doing, it functions as a

precursor of the kingdom of God and bids all who will to join the community

through faith in Christ. As Hays makes clear, "*The church is a countercultural*

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[98] John 17:13-20.

[99] Phil 3:20. There is some doubt whether πολίτευμα should be translated as "colony." O'Brian states, the "best attested in Hellenistic times and that is also most suitable for our context is 'state' or 'commonwealth' in an active and dynamic sense, a connotation that may be compared to βασιλεία as 'reign." Peter T. O'Brian. *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 460. Fee agrees with O'Brian's evaluation, but adds, "Although Paul's language will not quite allow the translation, "we are a colony of heaven" (Moffat), the point of the imagery comes very close to that. Just as Philippi was a colony of Rome, whose citizens thereby exemplified the life of Rome in the province of Macedonia, so the citizens of the "heavenly commonwealth" were to function as a colony of heaven in that outpost of Rome. That this is Paul's concern lies in the context." Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 379.

[100] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens,* 49.

community of discipleship ... [the] community, in its corporate life, is called to embody an alternative order that stands as a sign of God's redemptive purposes in the world."[101] In order for the church to live as an alternative community, it must embrace the particularity of its own story that distinguishes it from its surrounding cultural environs.[102] This is not, however, a call for monastic withdrawal from the world; it is, rather, an appeal to engage the world by offering it a true alternative. As the community of which Jesus Christ is chief cornerstone—"rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him"[103]—this particularity needs to be humbly celebrated and winsomely announced to the world.

In order to live in this creative tension with the world, the leaders of community of faith, as well as its members, must be people of virtue. Wisdom is needed, for example, to discern the difference between the essential and the adiaphorous. Courage, patience, and faithfulness are indispensable in order to continue in a pilgrimage that moves contrary to the currents of the world. The biblical virtue of hope, the certain expectation in the future, is needed in order avoid cynicism, acedia, or ideologies that seek to build Utopia without reference to God and the gift of the eschaton that he will bring to the world.[104]

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[101] Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 196. The emphasis is the author's.

[102] Commenting on the scriptures function in the community, Hauerwas observes that "the question of the moral significance of scripture…turns out to be a question about what kind of community the church must be to be able to make the narrative of scripture central for its life…first and foremost the community must know that it has a history and tradition which separate it from the world. Such separation is required by the very fact that the world knows not the God we find in the scripture." *A Community of Character,* 68.

[103] 1 Pet 2:4.

[104] Hauerwas winsomely states, "The virtue of patience, courage, hope, and charity must reign if the community is to sustain its existence. For without patience the church may be tempted to apocalyptic fantasy; without courage the church would fail to hold fast to the traditions from which it draws its life; without hope the church risks losing sight of its tasks; and without charity the church

Correspondingly, as a colony of heaven, the church is a community of memory and hope. With regard to memory, the church is part of God's ongoing story, his redemptive purposes for the world that is historically located in Israel, the church, and, supremely, in Jesus Christ. In remembering and retelling that story, our attention is drawn to the covenant fidelity of God, who has fulfilled his promise to redeem his people. Psalm 78, for instance, retells the story of the Exodus, emphasizing God's redemptive acts over and against Israel's rebellion. Where they were faithless and ungrateful he remained faithful and forgiving. The Psalm invites us as a community to review our life in light of God's covenant loyalty in order to kindle our obedience and gratitude. Similarly, Psalm 136 celebrates God's faithfulness in Israel's history, exhorting the people to "give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever." In reviewing the historical acts of God's past faithfulness, the community learns to "indwell" the story and is endowed with a sapiential perspective on the present.[105] In addition to the recognition of God's faithfulness, when we retell the biblical story we acknowledge that the present community of faith did not come into existence *ex nihilo*. Rather, we affirm that we are a "traditioned people... [and we] honor the chain of actual

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would not manifest the kind of life made possible by God. Each of these virtues, and there are others equally important, draws its meaning and form from the biblical narrative, and each is necessary if we are to continue to remember and to live faithful to that narrative." *A Community of Character*, 68.

[105] Lesslie Newbigin notes that "our proper relation to the Bible is not that we examine it from the outside, but that we *indwell* it and from within it seek to understand and cope with what is out there." *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989) 100. Emphasis is the author's.

benefactors who have sustained the skills and stories that provide us with the means to know and live our lives as God's creatures."[106]

With regard to hope, the church anticipates and reaffirms its certain future—the reconciliation of all creation. For believers the future is defined by the words, "He shall come again," which, when coupled with knowledge of the sweep of redemptive history, becomes a focal point of Christian action in the world. As a community of memory and hope, our life is tethered to the past, while at the same time our gaze is drawn to God's future. This provides us with "a transcendent vantage point for life in the present." [107] In reviewing God's redemptive history, we are encouraged to expect that, in his faithfulness, he will act on our behalf in the present. By looking to the future with a confident expectation that God will fulfill his promises, we are emboldened to live as a colony of heaven that reflects in the present the life of the coming glory of God.[108] As a community of memory and hope, the community of faith "offers people a new context of meaning and invites them to connect their personal aspirations with the community of those who seek to embody God's own purposes."[109] Memory and hope are developed and commemorated in the community through the corporate praxis of proclamation, study, teaching, worship, prayer, and fellowship, acts of service, sacred ritual, and symbols.

Life in community can be enlivening, but it also can be suffocating and death-dealing. Dysfunctional communities built on coercion, conformity, and

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[106] Hauerwas, *A Peaceable Kingdom*, 28.
[107] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 425.
[108] See Rom 8:17-30.
[109] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God,* 425.

unquestioned obedience to the community's leadership are legalistic and tend to produce rigid and brittle relationships that express little spontaneity or joy. Even in communities that are open and healthy, seemingly impenetrable disagreements occur, as well as political maneuvering for control of limited resources, and superficial friendships. The scriptures are clear that sin is the root cause of communal disintegration. Beginning with humanity's original parents and their immediate offspring, the introduction of sin into the world has left in its wake broken relationships, destroyed families, and warring nations. Reconciliation, overcoming enmity and restoration of peace and friendship, is the keynote of the gospel. Through Christ's death, peace with God is proffered to all who believe.[110] He has overcome the hostility between warring factions and "preached peace" to those who were once far away and to those who were near. He has made former enemies now fellow citizens and members of the same household.[111] Based on this new social arrangement in Christ, believers are exhorted to extend the same forgiveness to one another that God in Christ has extended to them. As Paul says in Ephesians, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God."[112] The community of faith cannot long endure without a generous measure of forgiveness being expressed among its members.

The formation of an alternative society is a powerful practice of the community of faith; it is a gift to the world. To lead a "colony of heaven" that

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[110] Rom 5:9-11; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Col 1:20-22.
[111] Eph 2:14-22; cf. Gal 6:15; Col 3:15.
[112] Eph 4:32-5:1.

engages the world in God's redemptive purposes requires virtuous leaders whose identity and character have been shaped by the biblical narrative and who find their purpose in leading the community in the fulfillment of its God-given mission.[113] As an extension of the community of faith, theological education, and the institutions that give it concrete social expression, functions as a practice of the church. At its best, a theological school plays a supporting, albeit important, role in life of the church; it is a handmaiden whose purpose is to serve the community in the realization of its *telos* by assisting it to form leaders who are capable of leading the community of faith as an alternative society. In itself, the seminary has no independent importance.[114] By placing theological education in proper perspective, the community of faith is appropriately recognized as the primary arena in which character is formed. This means that the seminary is not the only advocate for the formation of godly leaders. Equally, if not more importantly, the community of faith must be composed of people who require godly leaders. As Hauerwas points out, "A ministry of character is only possible if we are a people of character."[115] Moreover, it should be stressed that theological students must be active participants in the community of faith as preparation for their studies.

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[113] Hauerwas and Willimon make the following observation, "What does it mean for us to live in a culture of unbelief, a culture which does not even know it does not believe because it still lives on the residue of Christian civilization? What does it mean for the pastor to have as his or her job description, not the sustenance of a service club within a generally Christian culture, but the survival of a *colony* within an *alien society*? *Resident Aliens*, 117. The emphasis is the author's.

[114] Hauerwas and Willimon state, "The seminaries, like the clergy, depend on the congregation for direction. Seminaries, like the clergy they are producing, have no significance other than what needs to happen in the congregation. When seminaries do not get direction from congregations, they will go their own way—usually the wrong way." *Ibid.,* 115.

[115] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today,* 144.

The theological institution can serve the larger community of faith by modeling the type of community that lives faithfully by the gospel. This means conceptualizing theological education in terms of a community that seeks to achieve standards of excellence which are appropriate to its purpose or *telos*: the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor. This will take different forms both in curricular and non-curricular activities. It necessitates interpersonal relationships between students, professors, and staff. It certainly requires lusory attitudes, as discussed in the previous chapter, on the part of students, faculty, and administration in order to achieve the goal of character formation.

<div align="center">Cross</div>

The Christ Event, cross and resurrection, is the focal point of the biblical narrative. Martin Luther succinctly captured the centrality of the cross when he wrote, "*crux sola est nostra theologia*" (the cross alone is our theology).[116] There is no aspect of Christian life and thought that escapes the scrutiny of the cross. As Alister McGrath states, "The cross is the foundation and the criterion of Christian faith. Christian theology, Christian worship and Christian ethics are essentially nothing other than an attempt to explore and develop the meaning and implications of the crucified Christ in every area of life."[117]

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[116] Quoted by Alister E. McGrath in his *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1985), 1.

[117] Ibid., 19.

Throughout the New Testament one can track "the pervasive influence of the cross" and resurrection.[118] It is the essential theme of Jesus' life and ministry, as well as the foundation of all other New Testament writings. All four gospels give greater attention to Jesus' final week in Jerusalem than they do his ministry in Galilee. The Evangelists want their readers to understand that the Passion of Christ, far from being a fluke of history, was the fulfillment of Jesus' vocation as the Son of Man and Suffering Servant.[119] As Jesus so plainly announced to the disciples, it was "necessary" for the Son of Man to suffer, die, and rise again.[120] From his baptism in the Jordan River, where Jesus accepted his vocation, to the temptations in the wilderness, where Satan attempted turn him away from the cross, [121] to the disciple's delirious attempt to dissuade him from treading the path of the Suffering Servant,[122] Jesus remained obediently faithful to fulfill his Father's will. Neither the offer of quick and easy glory nor the pressure of his uncomprehending followers could deter Jesus from fulfilling of his vocation.

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[118] This expression comes from the title of the concluding chapter of John Stott's work, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 338.

[119] See Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (*New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971), 51-56; 268-276.

[120] Mark 8:31-32.

[121] Matt 4:1-11; par. Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. Many have called attention to how the testing of Jesus recapitulates the history of Israel. David Hill, for example, states that this narrative recapitulates "the temptations of Israel in the wilderness…. In his confrontation with Satan, Jesus triumphs over the temptations to which Israel succumbed in the desert, and takes upon himself the destiny of Israel to carry it to its fulfillment; in so doing, he proves himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, as declared at the Baptism." *The New Century Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1972), 99. See also Donald A. Hagner. *Matthew 1-13*: Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1993), 69-70; Jeremias points out that when Jesus presented himself for baptism, he made his formal declaration to walk the path of the Suffering Servant that would lead him to the cross. *New Testament Theology* § 8: Yes To The Mission, 68-75.

[122] Matt 16:22-23; Mark 8:31-33.

Even though the cross is necessary, it does not follow that it is readily appreciated. In its apparent foolishness and weakness, it is scandalous, confounding the wise and powerful of this age. Notwithstanding its appalling irregularity, the message of the cross stands at the center of apostolic preaching.[123] As the apostle Paul reminds the church in Corinth, the preaching of Christ's death and resurrection is a matter of first importance. [124] Through it, God demonstrates his love for us by securing our freedom from the consequences of sin and opening the door to a restored relationship with him in righteousness. [125] He does this in a manner that is totally unexpected, a way that no one in the name of human wisdom or power would have chosen. Thus Paul can write that "the foolishness of God is wiser that man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." [126]

Richard Hays highlights the imitation of Christ's death as the foundational element of the New Testament vision of the moral life. As he writes, "*Jesus' death on a cross is the paradigm for faithfulness to God in this world.*" [127] The cross is a voluntary act of sacrificial love and obedience that Jesus offers to his father on behalf of the world. As an act of faithfulness and obedience, believers are exhorted to imitate Christ's example. In the Christian community, the apostle Paul sums up the cruciform life of discipleship by the command he gives to the Galatians to "serve one another in love."[128] In the context of Galatians, love is certainly defined by the crucifixion of Jesus as the

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[123] Acts 2:22-36; 3:11-23; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:26-30.
[124] I Cor. 1:18-25; 2:2; 15:1-3.
[125] Rom 3:21-26; cf. 5:9-11; Rom 5:6-8.
[126] I Cor. 1:2.5.
[127] Hays, *Moral Vision,* 197. Emphasis is the author's.
[128] Gal 5:14.

one "who loved [us] and gave himself for [us]."[129] As the overarching aim for the community, love is not simply expressed in sporadic acts of heroic self-sacrifice, but also in daily details of life, even in matters that may appear insignificant. For instance, Paul appeals to the community in Rome to conform to Christ's death in the use of their freedom. In things adiaphorous, such as food and sacred days, the strong who can participate in such practices without scruples must not look down those who are unable to exercise the same freedom. As Christ did not please himself, so the strong should not please themselves but should use their freedom in a manner that does not cause their weaker brother to stumble.[130]

The epistle of Philippians demonstrates how the cross of Christ has become the ruling paradigm of the Christian life. Writing from prison, Paul encourages the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel and remain steadfast in the midst of opposition. As members of the community of faith, they are graced not only to believe in Christ; they are also granted the same measure of grace to suffer for him. In this double-sided grace, Paul serves as their example. During his first visit to Philippi, the community had seen how Paul had suffered for the gospel when he was falsely accused, beaten, and imprisoned. They had seen how the Lord vindicated him.[131] Now, once again, they have heard of the suffering he bears for the sake of the gospel. Whatever the outcome of his imprisonment, Paul only desires

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[129] Gal 2:20.
[130] Rom 15:1-3, 7; cf. 1 Cor 10:23-11:1.
[131] Acts 16:16-40

that he will have sufficient courage so that Christ may be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death.[132]

Chapter two begins with the exhortation to the members of the community to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." They are to lay aside selfish ambition and vain conceit, and be humble, esteeming others better than themselves. Paul's exhortation is founded upon the drama of Christ's self-emptying, which he recapitulates by reciting the *Carmen Christi*. The hymn exalts Christ as an example "who illuminates the way of obedience."[133] In the prologue to the Christ hymn, Paul commands the Philippians to imitate Christ's self-giving love: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."[134] Thus, as Jesus humbled himself, so, too, believers are to be humble and to consider other better than themselves.[135] They are not to let personal ambition rule, but like Jesus, they are to eschew vainglory. And in the same way that Jesus suffered to carry out his father's will, the Philippians are to stand firm in one spirit contending for the gospel, even if it entails suffering.[136]

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul recounts his own personal narrative as an example of what it means to follow in the footsteps of the crucified Jesus. Paul possessed all that his world could offer. Yet when compared with the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus," all that had once made him a person of religious distinction he now regarded as rubbish. Socially,

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[132] Phil 1:18-30.
[133] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 29.
[134] Phil 2:5.
[135] Phil 2:3.
[136] Phil 1:27, 29.

materially, and in every other way deemed essential by his culture, Paul's life epitomizes the scandal of the cross. Rather than look for the exoneration of his life by those things that hold apparent advantages, Paul's hope is that one day, just as Christ was highly exalted, he too will be vindicated. As he writes, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship (κοινωνία) of his sufferings, by becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attain the resurrection from the dead." Commenting on this passage Hays writes, "The *koinōnia* of his sufferings: that is Paul's picture of the life in Christ. In community with others, believers find themselves conformed to the death of Christ. Thus, the cross becomes the ruling metaphor of Christian obedience, while the resurrection stands as the sign of hope that those who now suffer will finally be vindicated by God."[137] The suffering pictured in Philippians is the suffering that comes as a consequence of "contending as one man for the faith of the gospel." It is a suffering to which all believers are called to partake.[138] Paul tells some of the salient points of personal biography in order to encourage the Philippians to imitate his example of following Christ. "Join with others in following my example" he writes, "and take note of those who live according the pattern we gave you."[139]

Paul's ardent desire to pursue the example of Christ's self-giving love is not only an example of Christian life; it is also the paradigm for Christian leaders who are role models for the members of the community of faith. In 1st and 2nd Corinthians Paul finds it necessary to defend his cruciform ministry. Over and

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[137] *Moral Vision*, 30-31.
[138] Rom 8:17, 28-39.
[139] Phil 3:17.

against the triumphalism of his Corinthian detractors, he is not embarrassed to describe himself in his apostolic role as "the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world."[140] The Corinthians, of course, will not let themselves perceive their leaders in such terms. They, and the ones they want to emulate as leaders, have already come into their full inheritance as children of the King.[141] The suffering and weakness displayed in Paul's ministry are sure signs to them that he has yet to experience the full privileges of his filial relationship with God. In order to demonstrate the wrong-headedness of their position, Paul compares his attitude with theirs through the rhetorical use of stinging irony.[142] The Corinthians are certain that they have come into their full stature as the children of God. Paul and his apostolic band are like those who have been placed at the end of the Roman triumphal procession; they have been condemned to death.[143] Thus he says, "We are fools for Christ, but you are so

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[140] 1 Cor 4:13.

[141] "Few interpreters capture this ironic contrast more vividly than Deluz: 'These Corinthians are lucky. *Already* they enjoy favours that the apostles dare only hope for. They no longer 'hunger and thirst after righteousness;' they are *filled*; in the theory of the Spirit, they have eaten to satiety…In short, the Messianic kingdom seems to have come to Corinth and these people have been given their thrones, while the apostles …are placed with the servants.'" Quoted by Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 359. The emphasis is the author's.

[142] 1 Cor 4:8-14.

[143] Hafemann explores the history of the word $\theta\rho\iota\alpha\mu\beta\epsilon\acute{\nu}\omega$, "led in triumphal procession," and shows that the word does not mean being led to victory by Christ but rather being led by Christ as the victor to one's death. According to Hafemann, historically, the explicit purpose or goal of the triumphal precession was twofold: to render thanks to the deity who had granted the victory in battle…and second, to glorify the general or consul who had achieved it. As it appears in the New Testament, "the use of 'to lead in triumphal procession'…*always* refers to the one who has been conquered and is subsequently led in the procession, and never to the one who has conquered or to those who have shared in his victory (e.g. his or by, fellow officers, etc.), "[T]he role of those thus 'led in triumph' was to reveal the glory and might of the victor by illustrating the strength of those conquered….[T]his illustration *often*, or *even normally* culminated, as did the procession as a whole, with the execution of these prisoners….*To be led in triumph could thus mean, in a word, to be led to one's death in the ceremony of the triumphal procession as a display of the victor's glory and, by implication, of the benevolence of the deity in granting this victory to the victor*." Scott J. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul's Defense of His Ministry in 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:3* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 29-31. The emphasis is the author's.

wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!" In this passage, Paul's use of irony is meant to provoke the Corinthians to reconsider their fascination with worldly power and wisdom, and to cause them to imitate him as their father in the faith.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul again finds it necessary to restate the cruciform shape of his ministry. More than in any other of his letters Paul is forced to speak of the sufferings that he encountered in his ministry.[144] This time an accusation against Paul seems to have come from outside the community by those who have introduced themselves and their presumed authority through letters of commendation.[145] At issue is Paul's suffering, which outsiders take as an indication that he does not participate in the powerful ministry of the Spirit of God.[146] From 2:14 to 7:4 the apostle goes about correcting their mistaken belief. Contrary to the teaching of outsiders, true ministry in the Spirit is cruciform. To show this, Paul begins his rebuttal by again using the metaphor of a Roman triumphal procession. He gives thanks to God for leading him in this procession because through his suffering God spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.[147] Unlike the outsiders who bring letters of commendation to establish the legitimacy of their ministry, Paul needs no such letters. The Spirit of the living God, the Spirit who gives life, indeed the Spirit who transforms believers into the image of

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[144] In 2 Corinthian Paul catalogues his suffering in 1:8-11; 6:3-10; 11:16-33.
[145] 2 Cor 3:1; cf. 5:12; 10:10, 12, 18; 12:11.
[146] This appears to be the reason for his argument in chapter 3, especially vv. 7-18.
[147] 2 Cor 2:14-17.

Christ works through Paul's ministry and makes the Corinthians living letters of commendation of his spirit-filled ministry.[148]

This powerful ministry, however, is not found in super-apostles,[149] but "in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God."[150] Reflecting on the cruciform shape of Jesus' ministry, Paul says that he and his apostolic band "always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."[151] Contrary to their claim, the super-apostles who disparage Paul's sufferings are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.[152] Like Satan, who is able to transform himself into an angel of light, they deceive the church by preaching a Jesus other than the Jesus Paul preaches; they urge the Corinthians to receive a spirit other than the one they have received. In short, they preach a different gospel.[153] Where the super-apostles boast in their superior strength and wisdom, Paul will speak only of his sufferings as the genuine mark of his apostleship: "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." [154] Perplexing as they may be, his sufferings for Christ are not without consolation. He has received a sure word from the Lord, who said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."[155]

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[148] 2 Cor 3:2-3, 17-18.
[149] 2 Cor 11:5, 12:11.
[150] 2 Cor 4:7.
[151] 2 Cor 4:10.
[152] 2 Cor 11:13-14.
[153] 2 Cor 11:4-6, 14.
[154] 2 Cor 11:30; cf. 12:10.
[155] 2 Cor 12:9.

Given the fact that Paul patterns his life and ministry after Christ's example, he has no qualms about calling his converts to follow his example. It is important to note that when the apostle speaks of imitation or being a role model, in the majority of the cases he does so in a context where he mentions suffering or the voluntary restriction of personal freedom for the greater good of the community of faith. In 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul instructs the members of the community to consciously limit their freedom to eat meat offered to idols in order not to cause a brother to stumble. His reason is simple: they are not to seek their own good but "the good of many." Paul exhorts them: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."[156] Elsewhere in his letter he censures the Corinthians for their triumphalism and reminds them that in Jesus Christ he has become their spiritual father. Hence he urges them to imitate his example of suffering for Christ.[157] In other examples, the apostle praises the Thessalonians for becoming "imitators of us and the Lord; in spite of severe sufferings."[158] And in a similar manner, subsequent to informing the Philippians about his ardent desire to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering, he calls upon them to "join with others in following my example...and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."[159]

Furthermore, Paul sends his close colleagues, who are thoroughly acquainted with his way of life, to instruct his converts to imitate him as he imitates Christ. For example, he sends Timothy to the Corinthians with

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[156] 1 Cor 10:33-11:1.
[157] I Cor. 4:14-16.
[158] 1 Thess 1:6.
[159] Phil 3:17.

instructions to remind them of "my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church." Paul also takes special care to encourage Timothy, his long-time associate, by reminding him of his example. Paul has modeled courage, faithfulness, and loyalty to Christ in the midst of suffering. Writing to Timothy from a Roman jail, where he is chained like a criminal, he exhorts: "Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel." [160] In the face of the last days with their disquieting vices and the depravity of false teachers, Timothy is to take courage in the example that he has seen in his mentor. He saw how Paul suffered during his evangelistic ministry in Lystra, Timothy's hometown. He knows all about Paul's teaching, his way of life, and his single-minded purpose to serve Christ. He is also cognizant of Paul's virtues: his faith in God, his forbearance with others, his patience in trying circumstances, his love for others, his endurance in persecutions and suffering. Timothy has observed all these characteristics in Paul's life. Therefore, Paul exhorts him to reflect on them and "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it." [161]

The cross is scandalous. It stands as a great contradiction to conventional wisdom and the exercise of human power. This has enormous implications for Christian leadership and theological education. Christian leadership modeled on the narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is by its very nature

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[160] 2nd Tim. 1:8; Cf. vv. 11-13; 2:3-6, 9-10.
[161] 2 Tim 3:14.

subversive; it calls into question many of the assumptions that drive our culture's quest for power and influence. To lead a community that lives under the sign of the cross and resurrection is to lead an alternative society, one that is culturally angular. Here, N.T. Wright's comments on the subversive action of stories are quite apposite. As he notes, narrative operates to convert us to another way of acting, thinking, and feeling. It plays a subversive role by providing a new way of perceiving the world. Biblical narrative, of which the cross and resurrection are, as Hays says, "the pivot-point of the ages,"[162] calls for a reorientation to life, a conversion, a radical turn-about of thinking and self-perception.

In connection with leadership development and conversion to new way of thinking, Jesus' preparation of the twelve disciples is wholly relevant. In order for them become the leaders he desires, the twelve disciples must experience a radical reorientation to reality. The apostle Peter is an excellent example of the effects of the subversive nature of the biblical narrative. In the gospel of Mark 8:27-33, Jesus asks his disciples a crucial question: "Who do you say I am?" Peter, perhaps as the spokesperson for the other disciples, exclaims, "You are the Christ!" Peter is right, of course, but he is also wrong; he has the right words, but the wrong narrative. To his complete amazement, Jesus then reinterprets the meaning of his mission and the nature of his role as Messiah, investing it with a totally unexpected meaning: Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of Man must suffer at the hands of the religious leaders; he must die and after three days rise again. For the disciples, such a Messiah

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[162] Hays, *Moral Vision*, 27.

does not exist in the national and religious narratives that have formed their expectations. The image of a weak Messiah, one who would allow his enemies to cause him great suffering, is intolerable. The dissonance that this triggers in Peter causes him to make a bold but presumptuous move: he takes Jesus aside and rebukes him!

Jesus' quick retort is a stinging rebuke, "Out of my sight Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."[163] Jesus will not allow any misunderstanding with regard to his true identity and mission. If Peter and the other disciples have false expectations about the coming Messiah, they must be converted and change their thinking. Not only does Jesus reinterpret the nature of the true Messiah, but he also reconfigures the concept of Christian discipleship by defining it in terms of his mission. If the nature of messianic mission is cruciform, so, too, is the life of discipleship. No matter how insufferable it may seem to their present predilections, if the disciples are to be like their Lord, they, too, must take on his character by picking up their cross.[164] This lesson is not easily learned. The idea of the Messiah who comes into his glory through suffering is, as the apostle Paul writes, "foolishness." [165] In Mark's gospel, as disciples wend their way to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will fulfill his mission, Jesus finds it necessary to repeat this lesson. Yet no matter how clearly he speaks of his sufferings, the disciples prove to be dull-witted and continue in their self-

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[163] Mark 8:33.
[164] Mark 8:34-38.
[165] 1 Cor 1:18-25.

seeking ways.[166] It will take time before the disciples see with new eyes, but the seed of a truthful story is planted, and the vision of what it means to be Christ's disciple finally comes to fruition.[167]

If Peter and his fellow disciples find it difficult to accept the idea of a crucified Messiah, they appear to be equally obtuse when it comes to understanding how Christ's death and resurrection changes the social arrangements between Jewish and non-Jewish believers. On this side of the cross and resurrection, the people of God are now made up not only of believing Jews, but all who come to faith in Christ. Former social and religious distinctions now have no meaning. For, in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus."[168] The implications of what this means in practice is the cause much of controversy.[169]

As the book of Acts and the writings of the apostle Paul make clear, the issue of gentile inclusion into the church calls for strong pastoral leadership qualified by profound theological reflection, a nuance and balanced application, as well as the willingness to walk in humility and love. Although social distinctions continue to exist in the Christian community, such differences must not form a barrier to fellowship. To err on this matter in terms of social praxis means more than to commit an injudicious blunder of social etiquette; it is to denigrate the grace of God and eviscerate the cross of

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[166] Mark 9:30-32; 10:35-45.
[167] Acts 1:6; Acts 2:23, 36; 1 Pet 2:21.
[168] Gal 3:27.
[169] Acts 15:1-31.

its meaning.[170] Consequently, in order for this new social reality to flourish, Jewish Christian leaders, like the apostle Peter, need a profound transformation of their worldview. The cross and resurrection have opened a new chapter in the biblical narrative and Christian leaders need to allow their character and social praxis to be conformed accordingly.

A compelling illustration of this transformation is found in Acts chapter 10. Through an extraordinary intervention, the apostle Peter is confronted with the significance of gentile inclusion into the people of God. In preparation for the events that shortly take place, Peter is given a vision in which he is instructed to consume foods prohibited by the law along with the command, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."[171] Soon thereafter he finds himself standing in the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Aware that he is crossing a social boundary, he reminds his host that "it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean."[172] Undone by the vision, and now confronted by Cornelius and his relatives, he is ready to admit, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right."[173] Peter has traveled down the road of true conversion. In Christ, the distinctions that have separated Jew from Gentile are now eradicated; the subversive leaven of the gospel has begun to affect his mind and heart.

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[170] Gal 2:11-21.
[171] Acts 10:15.
[172] Acts 10:27-28.
[173] Acts 10:34-35.

Peter's declaration that God "accepts men from every nation" could have brought to a close the narrative episode. But Luke chronicles one more essential ingredient in Peter's conversion. In verse 44 we read: "While Peter was still speaking…the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message." The coming of the Spirit upon the expectant Gentiles before Peter completes his sermon is the last bit of incontrovertible evidence that God has indeed accepted non-Jewish believers. He and the Jews who came with him "are astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out even on the Gentiles." As a consequence, Peter offers the gentile believers the rite of inclusion into the new people of God, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."[174]

It is difficult for 21st century readers to appreciate the deep emotional impact that both the Caesarea Philippi and the Cornelius incidents had on Peter. In the first instance, his religious and cultural training taught him to expect a Messiah who would act in a manner more in tune with the power displayed in the Roman Legions. His vision of Jesus' leadership was quixotic, perhaps hoping that Jesus would lead a Maccabean-type rebellion that would throw off the yoke of political and irreligious tyranny. Whatever the exact background, it is certain from his response that Peter and his colleagues experienced angst over Jesus' reinterpretation of his role as Messiah. To accept the cross as the paradigm of Christian discipleship required Peter and his colleagues to undergo a radical reformation of thinking and behavior.

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[174] Acts 10:45, 47.

Peter's example is apt because nothing in his cultural training had prepared him for the episode at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus' declaration of his suffering unhinged Peter; it ambushed him on the road to what he hoped would be a path to glory. He and his fellow disciples were scandalized by Jesus' prediction of his suffering.

In the second case, Peter showed that he had little expectation for gentiles to become believers without fully acculturating to Jewish life and mores. Even though he, along with the other disciples, had been given the command to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, he needed a conversion experience to see the implications of Jesus' command. To require gentile believers to assimilate to Jewish social and religious practices was unnecessary and an offense against the grace of God in Christ. Although the Cornelius episode had set Peter on the right road with regard to gentile inclusion, Peter did not always walk with rectitude in the knowledge he had received. Paul records in Galatians chapter 2 that when Jewish social pressure mounted, Peter was not above denying by his actions the full inclusion of non-Jewish believers into the family of God. Fortunately for him, and for us, his colleague had the courage to name his hypocrisy and to call him once again to walk according to the gospel.[175]

Paul's insistence that his converts imitate his example and the two abovementioned episodes in Peter's life provide insight into leadership development. On the one hand, Paul's determination to follow Christ, no matter the cost, is an example of courage and faithfulness in pursuing the

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[175] Gal 2:11-14.

mission that God has given the community of faith. The suffering that Paul

speaks of is suffering that arises from the faithful prosecution of his calling.

Peter, on the other hand, illustrates a leader's need for continual conversion.

As a leader, his transformation proceeds from a deepened understanding of

the implications of the Christian story. In both cases, virtues such as humility,

courage, longsuffering, and faithfulness interpreted in the light of cross are

needed. Humility is not modesty, but, as in Christ's example, it is the

voluntary laying aside of rights and privileges in the interest of others.

Courage is not defined by heroic actions on the battlefield or by standing firm

for any worthy cause; it is fidelity to the gospel in the midst of opposition.

Longsuffering is not a twisted need for pain, but the patient confidence that,

just as God raised Christ from the dead, he will also one day vindicate our

suffering for the cause of Christ. Faithfulness is constancy that expresses love

and unyielding obedience to complete the will of the Father.

As stated above, a Christian leader's position within the community of

faith inescapably makes him a role model, whether for good or ill. Needed are

leaders who embody the life of virtue that is shaped by the biblical narrative in

order to help others understand the meaning of virtue.[176] Stanley Hauerwas

underscores how the boundaries of our moral imagination and actions are

limited to what we can envision. The biblical narrative, which has as its

centerpiece the cross and resurrection, serves as a lens that corrects our

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[176] Hauerwas states, "Each of the major offices in Israel—king, priest, and prophet—also drew its substance from the need for Israel to have a visible example to show how to follow the Lord. What was needed were people who embodied in their lives and work the vocation of Israel to 'walk' in the 'way' of the Lord. The king, the prophet, and the priest were judged by how well they dedicated their lives to being suitable models for the people to imitate." *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 28.

ability to see by furnishing us a way to perceive the world in a truthful manner. [177] To see the world in a truthful manner requires training in pertinent skills that help us to perceive it. This training takes place within the community that lives faithfully by the gospel and produces mature leaders who exhibit in their person the meaning of virtue. Here it is good to keep in mind MacIntyre's description of a practice which involves standards of excellence that summon us to obedience.[178] A godly role model functions much like a master craftsman who allows his apprentice to peer over his shoulder in order to learn by imitation the moves of his mentor.[179] In order for the apprentice to advance in his craft, he must be willing to admit his lack of knowledge and subject his attitudes and preferences to the standard of excellence set out by the master craftsman. In this way, the apprentice not only learns the appropriate technical skills, he also absorbs the lusory attitudes that are necessary to become a master craftsman. In a similar fashion, to be virtuous means learning from the example of role models who are farther along in the Christian pilgrimage; it means imitating not only what they do but the spirit in which they do it.[180] For instance, Paul's missionary strategy and achievements can be studied and imitated to good effect, but

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[177] Ibid., 29-31.

[178] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190.

[179] Hauerwas elaborates on this idea when he writes, "I suspect that the insistence on learning to live as you are and be as you live is part of the reason that Christians have maintained that the Christian life finally requires attention to masters of that life. For it is from the masters that we learn skills necessary to have lives appropriate to the claim that we are nothing less than God's people. For the most central of Christian convictions is the assumption that no statement or principle of morality can be sufficient to make us moral. Rather to be moral requires constant training, for the story that forms our lives requires nothing less than perfection—i.e. full participation in an adequate story." *A Community of Character*, 150.

[180] "No one can become virtuous merely by doing what virtuous people do. We can only be virtuous by doing what virtuous people do in the manner that they do it." Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 76.

without submitting to the same standard of excellence as he—to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings—we will not be formed in the virtues that characterized his life.

The subversive action of the Christian narrative, seen most explicitly in the cross, brings to light important concerns for theological education. It may be the case that theological education fails to form character because it fails to expect the biblical narrative to challenge deeply held beliefs of its students (and professors). On occasions, theological education that is true to biblical narrative will be quite disturbing. We should not seek to blunt the disquieting aspects of the gospel. The cross is still scandalous and still shows that "the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom." Engaging pedagogical skills that seek to engender positive attitudes among the students should not be used to avoid the struggle that results from coming to grips with the angular aspects of the gospel.

On the other hand, the expectation and perspective of students are also essential ingredients. If they are open and listening to the text they will experience the subversive leaven of the biblical narrative. This means that they must be willing to submit their tastes and preferences to the standards of excellence in theological education. Consequently, students must have lusory attitudes that embrace the means of excellent theological education that is measured by it *telos*. It certainly means running hard up against false expectations; it means accepting correction of misinterpretation of texts and the priorities of ministry. It also means the formation of habits of mind and heart that seek the goods internal to theological education and not just the

external benefits. Having said this, it is clear from the life of Peter that patience is needed in the process of developing godly leaders. It is no easy thing to give up dearly held beliefs and embrace attitudes and behaviors that are consonant with those new beliefs. It takes practice and the encouragement of a community and the presence of role models who can offer guidance and support. Change that has a long-term effect is not usually instantaneous, even when initiated by the miraculous. The subversive effect of the biblical narrative will be experienced many times as students (and professors) are continually converted by the moral implications of the gospel.

New Creation

The teleological feature of virtue ethics, while essential for the development of virtue, cannot be brought over into Christian thought without a serious reorientation to the biblical narrative. In Greek thought, teleology is eudaemonic and gives scant attention to the afterlife. Scripture, however, reveals that our *telos* moves beyond time. God purposed from the beginning that those who believed the gospel would "be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren."[181] This will only take place when Christ "transforms our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."[182] Among theologians across the broad spectrum of Christian traditions and ecclesiastical backgrounds a consensus exists that identifies conformity to the image of Christ as the *telos* of the Christian life.[183]

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[181] Rom 8:29.

[182] Phil 3:21; cf. Rom 8:18.

[183] Joseph Kotva has compared the works of Hendrickus Berkhof, Millard Erickson, John Macquarrie, Norma Kraus, and Edward Schilebeeckx, respectively representing Reformed,

Although there are disagreements on some of the details, there is agreement that conformity to the image of Christ is the goal of the Christian life and that this conformity is not "just an external or superficial resemblance. It signifies the whole set of characteristics or qualities which makes something what it is."[184] In other words, it calls believers to acquire increasingly those traits, habits, capacities, and dispositions of character that embody the goal of their faith in Christ. The process of growth begins with conversion, which occasions an "entry into the ongoing activity of God in bringing his creation to this grand *telos*..."[185] and continues throughout life.

The Easter proclamation of the early church, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" brings forward one of the essential differences between Christian and secular virtue ethics. Biblical teleology is thoroughly eschatological. As an eschatological reality, the Christian *telos* is not a human achievement, but a gift of New Creation that has come about by the death and resurrection of Christ. The End is under God's control and cannot be attained through the will to power or through the struggle to construct Utopia on earth. Jonathan Wilson observes that "we have seen the future in Jesus Christ. This means that the *telos* of humanity lies ultimately in the work of God, not in human nature as such or in any community created by humanity." [186] The *telos* of the community of faith will not be realized in this life but only in the age to come. Of course, this does not mean that as believers we can be passive about

Evangelical, Liberal, Anabaptist, and Catholic traditions and has demonstrated their essential agreement this matter. *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 72ff.

[184] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 970.

[185] Grenz, *A Theology for the Community of God,* 438.

[186] Wilson, *Gospel Virtues*, 41-42.

growth in grace. Rather, since Christ is our future and his presence now indwells us in the person of the Spirit of God, the focus of our life must be directed and patterned on the future that he brings into existence.

Biblical eschatology does not simply deal with the events of the last days that precede the coming of Christ. To limit eschatology to these events marginalizes a theme that permeates the whole biblical narrative. One of the important developments in twentieth century New Testament studies was the clarification of the apocalyptic doctrine of the two ages: the present age of evil characterized by suffering and oppression would give way to the new age or the messianic age in which God establishes his righteous rule and vindicates the nation of Israel. Now, through Christ's death and resurrection, a fundamental change has taken place in this apocalyptic scheme: in Christ, the messianic age has arrived. God has judged the old age, which is now passing away, and has inaugurated the new age. Christ has changed the playing field for the world and especially for the community of faith. As Hays states,

> *The church embodies the power of the resurrection in the midst of a not-yet-redeemed world.* Paul's image of 'new creation' stands here as a shorthand signifier for the dialectical eschatology that runs throughout the New Testament.... The eschatological framework of life in Christ imparts to Christian existence its strange temporal sensibility, its odd capacity for simultaneous joy amidst suffering and impatience with things as they are.[187]

Believers, indeed the whole world, live in an intermediate time between Christ's first coming and the final denouement. Yet biblical eschatology is more dynamic than just affirming that there is an intermediate period between the First and Second Advent of Christ. As Hays's definition makes

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[187] Hays, *Moral Vision,* 198. Emphasis is the author's.

clear, the community of faith presently embodies the power of the resurrection while it awaits its full redemption. But as he also points out, there is a dialectical tension between the redemption that has been set in motion by the death and resurrection of Christ and its consummation, which will be realized in the eschaton. There exists, then, a tension in which "believers *already* have the blessings of the age to come, but they do *not yet* have them in their fullness."[188] This eschatological perspective undergirds the New Testament use of indicative and imperative modes that we discussed above.[189] This intermediate time is not devoid of purposeful activity or direction. By his gracious initiative in Christ, we have passed from death to life and have come into a new relationship with God; while we still continue in the present age, his sustaining and empowering grace enables us to grow into the likeness of Christ.

The concept of teleology, an important feature of virtue ethics, must be qualified further by the New Testament's teaching on the Holy Spirit. For the apostle Paul, the Spirit is the eschatological Spirit, whose presence among the people of God signals the breaking in of the future rule of God. Traditionally, Israel expected the active presence of the Spirit to appear in the age to come. For instance, the prophecies found in the writings of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and

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[188] Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979) 58.

[189] Herman Ridderbos remarks, "[The] relation of the indicative and imperative is altogether determined by the present redemptive-historical situation. The indicative represents the 'already' as well as the 'not yet.' The imperative is likewise focused on the one as well as the other." *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 257.

Joel[190] looked to the messianic age when the Spirit would dwell in fullness among God's people. As Peter explained on the Day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit upon the gathered community meant that the messianic age had arrived. The blessings and privileges of the future that the prophets foretold are now given to us through the Spirit. Therefore, "the reception of the Spirit means that one has become a participant in the new mode of existence associated with the future age, and now partakes of the 'powers of the age to come.'"[191] Yet this new mode of existence takes place in the midst of the not yet fully redeemed creation.

At present our participation in the future is partial, but not insignificant. For the apostle Paul, the presence of the Spirit is the "firstfruits" of our anticipated future glory.[192] In the midst of our present weakness, he is a genuine foretaste of our "adoption as son, the redemption of our bodies." Or as Paul describes elsewhere, the Spirit is the "guarantee," the first installment that ensures the glory that will be fully ours in Christ's return.[193] Hence the Spirit is the experiential evidence, the foretaste of the future, that reign of God has irrupted into present and the sure guarantee that what God has initiated in Christ he will bring to consummation. Meanwhile, in this interim period, the Spirit transforms our life into the likeness of Christ and imprints the reality of God's holiness upon our heart. The older covenant, which came with glory and was engraved on stone, has been superseded by surpassing glory of the newer covenant, which is now engraved upon the human heart. Thus,

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[190] Jer 31:33-34; Ezek 36:24-28; 37:11-14.
[191] Hoekema *The Bible and the Future,* 58.
[192] Rom 8:18-25.
[193] 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:14. See Fee, *God's Empowering Presence,* 806-807.

"we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness." [194] This transformation is initiated by conversion ("turning to the Lord"), which is achieved by the Spirit.[195] Like Romans 12:2, this change is a profound renovation of heart and mind that takes place over time and is a token of our future resurrection,[196] since, as believers, we are "being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory."[197] The goal of this transformation "is nothing else than a transformation into the moral and spiritual likeness of the now glorified Christ."[198] The eschatological reality found in the New Testament transposes the character formation into a higher key. The presence of the Spirit is the active grace of God that enables growth and is instrumental in the transformation of believers.

It is in light of what has been said about the eschatological Spirit that we are to understand Paul's contrast between the "flesh" and "Spirit." Rather than understand the flesh as the downward pull of our fallen nature that wars against the Spirit, or understand spirit as a higher (spiritual) faculty within us that is imprisoned by our body, the metaphors, flesh and the Sprit, describe two kinds of existence. The first is characterized and conditioned by the present age that is passing away; the latter expresses our new eschatological existence that has come through Christ and the Spirit. As Fee states, "Living according to the flesh belongs to our existence *before* and *outside* of Christ; it

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[194] 2 Cor 3:17-18.

[195] Note the present passive indicative μεταμορφόομαι.

[196] As in Romans 12:2, the emphasis on the continuous action of moral and spiritual transformation that takes place over time is deduced from the present tense of the verb μεταμορφόομαι.

[197] See Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 66-67.

[198] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 208.

is totally incompatible with life 'according to the Spirit'. [Where it might appear that Paul is speaking of a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit], his point rather is *the sufficiency of the Spirit* as we live in our present 'already but not yet' existence.'"[199] Again, this perspective of the Spirit's sufficiency brings to the discussion of virtue ethics an element that is quite foreign to non-Christian views.[200] Christian virtue is never a simple matter of unaided effort. Of course, as we will discuss below, effort is indispensable in order to realize the upward call in Christ. Yet we do not struggle solely in our own strength.

The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit leads to a necessary discussion of Galatians chapter 5. According to the point of view expressed above, the works of the flesh are representative sins that characterize the present age that has been judged by God in Christ and is now passing way. While mention is made of sexual sins, which are most often, and for obvious reasons, thought of as the sins of the flesh, the majority of vices listed are sins of dissension that destroy the community.[201] In like fashion, the virtues listed as the fruit of the Spirit are descriptive nouns that characterize life according to the eschatological Spirit. Also, just as the works of the flesh are vices that destroy community, so the fruits of the Spirit are characteristically communal

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[199] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 817. The emphasis is the author's.

[200] Of course, the view taken here concerning the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit is not without its own controversy. It is probably safe to say that the majority of past and present interpreters do not view this contrast in terms presented here.

[201] The probable reason that Paul lists the sins of dissension is to counter this very problem within the Christian community in Galatia. In verse 15, Paul warns the Galatians, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." Given that the fruit of the Spirit also points to life in community, that 6:2 calls the members of the community to bear each other's burdens, and that the metaphor of sowing to the flesh and Spirit ends with an exhortation to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers," it is clear that Paul is addressing this problem.

virtues that build up the community of faith. Moreover, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are constitutive qualities of our Christian *telos*; they are proleptic tokens of our full transformation into the likeness of Christ that is made real at the present time by the sufficiency of the Spirit. As we pointed out earlier, the community of faith is a colony of heaven that is to show forth in the present the life of its eschatological future. In this manner it functions as God's alternative society that witnesses to the pagan society surrounds it. The fruit of the Spirit, as well as other virtues found in the New Testament, is essential to the realization of life lived within a heavenly colony.

The eschatological tension between the already and not yet give to the Christian life "its strange temporal sensibility," to quote Hays. This dialectical tension between the already and not yet is the basis both for confidence, since we already experience a new mode of life in the Spirit, and humility, since we have not yet arrived. It is this tension that underscores our need for character formation, the continual march toward that which we already are in Christ. As Fee has stated, "To the degree that the old aeon has not yet passed away, we still must learn 'to walk by the Spirit,' to behave 'in keeping with the Spirit,' and to 'sow to the Spirit.' But we do so precisely because the Spirit is sufficient, not because we live simultaneously 'according to the flesh' and 'according to the Spirit."[202] MacIntyre's fundamental contrast "between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-

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[202] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 822.

nature"[203] must be reinterpreted in light of the new reality that God has set in motion through Christ. Seen in the light of biblical eschatology, the fundamental contrast is "between-what-believers-presently-are-in-Christ and what-they-will-become-when-they-are-fully-redeemed-and-conformed-to-his-image. There still remains, of course, a disparity between what we are and what we are yet to become when we realize our *telos* in eternity. The accent in Christian virtue ethics, however, falls upon the new life that already has been given to us in Christ. Virtue ethics makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of Christian discipleship by the reminder that growth moves toward a definite *telos* and that virtue is both a necessary means to reach our *telos* and at the same time a constitutive aspect of it. Biblical teleology relocates the narrative structure of virtue ethics and reinterprets it in light of the eternal gospel.[204]

The Spirit's activity in the formation of our character does not remove the need for our involvement and struggle. The New Testament uses an array of metaphors for growth that moves consistently toward a defined goal. The common Semitic idiom "walk" is often used by the apostle Paul for a lifestyle which "governs a man in his being and acting"[205] and may be translated "to conduct oneself," "to behave," or "to live" with either negative or positive overtones.[206] While the metaphor does not necessarily demonstrate moral progress, it does draw attention to the dynamic quality of Christian character

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[203] *MacIntyre, After Virtue*, 52.
[204] Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 61.
[205] G. Ebel, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 944.
[206] Rom 8:4; 13:13; Gal 5:16; 1 Thess 4:12; Eph 4:1.

formation developed through patterns of behavior engaged in over a period of time. A more goal-oriented metaphor is Paul's employment of "a race." Like an Olympic athlete who runs with the purpose of winning the prize, the runner sets his sights on the finish line and does not run aimlessly but with purpose and resolve.[207] Similarly, believers are to "press forward to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [them]…, straining for what is ahead in order to win the prize for which God has called [them] heavenward in Christ Jesus."[208] Running in the race to obtain the winning wreath requires progress, the development of skills accompanied by a disciplined desire, and determination.

The concept of teleology as movement toward a definite goal can also be detected by the concern New Testament writers display for the continued growth of believers. In some cases, they take to task their readers for their lack of maturity. For example, in the strongest language possible, the writer of Hebrews chides his readers for their immaturity: "You need milk, not solid food!…. Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us…go on to maturity."[209] Even among those who have made substantial progress in the faith by demonstrating their love one for another, the apostle Paul can pray that the Lord would make their "love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else".[210] These passages are enough to demonstrate that while the quest for growth is aided by the Spirit, believers are not excused from the

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[207] 1 Cor 9:26.
[208] Phil 3:12-14.
[209] Heb 5:11-6:1; cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3; 2 Cor 6:13.
[210] I Thess. 3:12; 4:10 cf. Phil 1:9.

struggle to become what they already are in Christ. While the struggle

continues, we can be confident that in the sufficiency of the Spirit we will

overcome. The process of overcoming, however, requires the development of

qualities, inclinations, and habits that reflect the image of Christ.

We want to bring this section to a close by a brief discussion of the

pilgrim motif and worship as a practice of hope. The process of our spiritual

formation that takes place within the eschatological tension of the already and

not yet is best understood as a pilgrimage, an adventure to reach our final

destination that is initiated by God in Christ and undertaken in the power of

the Spirit. It vividly describes the dynamics of faithful discipleship with all its

challenges, victories, and setbacks. Although the word 'pilgrim,' or 'sojourner,'

appears infrequently in the Bible, the concept is clearly discernable

throughout the biblical narrative. When the writers of scripture employ the

word pilgrim, it is used to encourage believers to righteous living. The apostle

Peter, for instance, exhorts his readers, who in Christ have been made a "royal

priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God," to see themselves as

"aliens and strangers in the world." Because they are on pilgrimage in the

world, they are to "abstain from sinful desires" and to live among their pagan

neighbors in such a way that their "good works will be seen" and "bring glory

to God in the Day of Judgment."[211]

With the pilgrimage motif in mind, Hauerwas and Willimon write that

"in its essence, the biblical narrative is a story about a people's journey with

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[211] 1 Pet 2:11-12.

God."[212] Beginning with the call of Abraham and ending with the eschatological fulfillment of the ages, God calls humankind to walk with him in faith and obedience as he brings to completion his designs to redeem the world. Abraham is the example par excellence. His life forms the paradigm of a faithful pilgrim who lives with the unrequited hope of a promised future. The author of the book of Hebrews extols him and others like him as heroes of the faith: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own....They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."[213]

To live as a pilgrim is to live in the light of the future. It means to move toward a goal, to have some end in mind that, once realized, fulfills the purpose of the journey. As recipients who have been granted a God-given journey, believers take part in an adventure that leads them toward their destination. The journey is filled with many blessings, but it is also fraught with many perils. Around every bend in the road, faithful travelers are presented with opportunities to press forward toward the goal or to become mired down in situations that sidetrack their progress. Consequently, successful completion of their journey requires the development of virtues, skills, abilities, inclinations, and habits of the heart that speed them on their

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[212] Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens,* 53.
[213] Heb 11:11-15.

way. In order to avoid discouragement and needless detours, pilgrims need such virtues as wisdom, diligence, perseverance, hope, faithfulness, and humility, the willingness to receive correction when they turn aside from the way.

For a Christian leader, the pilgrim motif serves as an excellent template not only for his personal growth, but also for his leadership within the community of faith. A leader may be only a few steps ahead of the people he leads, but his example does, nonetheless, inspire others and enlightens the advance. The adventure of a pilgrimage is found in moving forward, confronting and overcoming difficulties that are at times overwhelming and tempt a leader to turn away from the narrow road that leads to life. These difficulties are, as we have seen, the legitimate obstacles that arise from pursuing standards of excellence that seek the goods internal to a narrative's *telos*. Jesus describes them as bearing the cross, and the apostle Paul recognizes them as obstacles that issue from imitating Christ.

Faithfulness to stay in the pilgrim way and to lead in a manner that reflects Christ's likeness is essential, particularly when weariness comes from doing good. Likewise, courage buoyed by hope is indispensable in order to continue in the journey to the Celestial City. The virtue of hope, the confident expectation in the future glory of God, which is partially experienced now through the Spirit, rebukes despair, acedia (the noonday demon), and cynicism, all of which destroy ministry. The journey also requires wisdom to discern the forks in the road, complex situations, and advice given by people encountered on the way. It requires patience bred by the knowledge that God

will bring in the future. Pilgrims imbued with this patience will avoid transforming the Christian faith into an ideology and will resist the temptation to bring in the kingdom of God through manipulation, coercion or fraud.

The journey requires humility, kindness, goodness, and gentleness, all of which enable fellow travelers to journey together in peace. Forgiveness is indispensable, as the journey is a way of peace; the pilgrims who walk in it must eschew revenge. They know that one day God will forever put evil on the scaffold and that he will rule the world in righteousness. Above all, love is the essential virtue that binds all the others together in perfect unity.[214]

One way in which leaders are strengthened to do this is by their participation in leading the community to remember its story and heritage in Christ. Much of this is accomplished when the community gathers for worship. Marva Dawn has stressed the importance of worship as an instrument of individual and communal character formation. She pays particular attention to the necessity keeping worshipers' focus on God as both the subject and the object of worship. As she puts it,

> Worship is a crucial key, for in worship we experience the presence of the self-giving God to create and nurture our faith. Worship forms us; all the elements of the service develop the character of believer in us. And worship forms the community if it unites us in common beliefs, traditions, renewal, and goals. Worship schools us in the language of faith as we listen and sing and participate in its rites.[215]

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[214] Col 3:14.
[215] Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 149.

Along the same lines, Simon Chan, a Pentecostal, recommends a return the

priority of the public reading of scriptures and its corollary listening.

According to him, these are communal activities "that constitute a

traditioning process." By the public reading of scripture, which Chan prefers

to be done in canonical order, the biblical drama of redemption is "impressed

on the church's collective memory," and "the church's basic identity comes to

be reshaped."[216] Correspondingly, he argues that the sermon needs to be

viewed as "essentially the unfolding of the story in a contemporary idiom"[217]

in order for believers to relate more completely with it. The habit of

participating in communal worship that retells the Christian story is a key

practice in the development of Christian virtue. As viewed by the world,

worship may be a "royal waste of time;"[218] but in fact it is an act of subversion

against a fallen world that desires its own sovereignty without the interference

of its rightful ruler. It is an act of remembrance of the essentials of the gospel

that invite all who will to come and find life. At best the world as we know it is

a penultimate reality that will one day give way to the full rule of its creator

and redeemer. In worship, believers declare that the rule of the messianic age

has already begun and that their hope of its fullness, their true *telos*, awaits

the denouement.

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[216] Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 117.
[217] Ibid.
[218] This phrase comes from the title of Mara Dawn book, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to review briefly some of the main theological themes that inform a more fully developed Christian virtue ethic. We began by noting important objections to the use of virtue ethics as a paradigm for Christian character formation. In short, the concerns over the use of virtue ethics as a paradigm for Christian ethics are justified. But as we also saw, given certain qualifications, there is no inherent reason to reject virtue ethics as a viable model of Christian character formation. We then turned our attention to the reasons why virtue is necessary for Christian leadership. In a nutshell, the reasons are basic to the nature of the Christian life: all Christians are called to be virtuous, but Christian leaders, especially, carry a responsibility to be virtuous, since they are role models within the community of faith and who are to demonstrate by their lives what it means to be a godly person.

What followed these preliminary issues was a brief discussion of the main elements of virtue ethics as seen in light of the biblical narrative. In our exposition, no attempt is made to be exhaustive. Absent from our discussion is any serious mention of creation, covenant, sapiential, prophetic, or apocalyptic literature, all of which could have been chosen for our study. For the sake of economy and because of the close alignment with the main feature of virtue ethics, we chose Richard Hays's fundamental metaphors of *Community, Cross, and New Creation*. These three metaphors are closely intertwined. Like the strands of a rope which can be separated for the purpose of study, no single strand is sufficient to replace the whole. It is obvious that

many of the themes mentioned under the heading of one metaphor could just as well have been discussed under one of the others. For example, the discussion of eschatology and the Spirit could have been reviewed in the section on community, since the community of faith is also the community of the Spirit. The question of imitation that we discussed under the category of the cross could also have been looked at under the heading of community, since it is in community that one finds adequate role models. It is hoped that sufficient explanation has been given to shed light on the unique signature of Christian virtue.

The paradigm presented here is suggestive of the type of theological reflection needed to guide our efforts in character formation; it serves as a workable model for theological education in that it makes theology an intrinsic facet of Christian character formation and applies to all areas of the institution's efforts. The model, however, is more complex than simply adding more theological or biblical courses to the school's curriculum. As Hauerwas puts it, "It is not enough to train people in Scripture, church history, theology, and ethics, but that training must serve to make their lives, and their professor's lives, available to God's shaping as officials of the church."[219] Theological education can be a powerful practice of the church that shapes character. Yet without participation in the community faith in which we are trained in virtue, the goal will remain elusive. Without role models who are courageous enough to call others to follow them as they lead the way in serving Christ in a self-giving manner, the school's effort will be deficient.

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[219] Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today,* 144.

Without a clear understanding of its *telos* and the standards of excellence that seek the goods internal to its *telos*, theological education will focus on objectives of penultimate value. Without lusory attitudes, students will not embrace the goods internal to the school's *telos*, and the seminary's goal of character formation will be thwarted, and theological education will become a means for secondary ends.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODS OF STUDY AND ANALYSIS

In chapter one, we proposed to conduct a qualitative study that seeks to measure the congruence and dissonance of students' attitudes and expectations with regard to ESEPA's goals to form character. Since the meaning of these words and concepts shape expectations, it is necessary to investigate the students' active and latent understanding of the nomenclature that is used by the institution to communicate its objectives. Terms such as "spirituality," "spiritual formation," "character," and "character formation" are abstract nouns and adjectives that require clarification. This is especially true of the terms "spirituality" and "spiritual formation," which can mean nothing more than the ethereal or a sense of transcendent well-being that satisfies one's subjective tastes. Within the limits of their semantic domains, both character formation and spiritual formation enjoy a wide polyvalence, making it necessary to pay careful attention to their function within a given context. Character/character formation and spirituality/spiritual formation tend to be interpreted as separate cognitive categories. It should be clear from chapters two and three that these terms are only intelligible when interpreted in their narrative context, either secular or biblical. It should also be clear from these same chapters that in light of the biblical narrative there exists no substantive difference between the phrases "spiritual formation" and "character formation." In the case of ESEPA, some clarity and mutual agreement about these terms is indispensable. When multiple meanings are allowed to flourish without specification, it creates a situation in which the

institution's objective and students' expectations can be set at cross-purposes. When these terms are used congruently among administration, students, and professors, the institution is on a good footing to realize, in larger measure, the outcomes that it desires for its students.

The second interlocking area that needs investigation is the students' prior knowledge of the seminary's objective. In what way, if any, does the prior knowledge of the school's objective affect student's expectations? Of course, there is an indissoluble link between a student's understanding of character formation and his prior knowledge of the school's objective. It may be the case that knowledge of the school's goal has encouraged some students to come to the seminary with a hunger for spiritual transformation. High expectations, however, will not be sufficient to achieve the school's goal if the students' prior understanding of character formation diverges significantly from the meaning employed by institution. Where this is the case, motivated students, in all probability, will be dissatisfied with their studies. Of course, it may be the case that a student's prior knowledge will not create high expectations. On the other hand, it may be the case that other students will come who have no prior knowledge of the seminary's objective but still possess high expectations; or, it could very well be that others will come who have no prior knowledge and have little anticipation or desire for a substantive change of character. All of these scenarios are possible and affect positively or negatively the school's effort to shape the students' character. Consequently, it needs to be asked: What prior knowledge did the students have concerning the seminary's objective? And, what did they expect with regard to character

formation when they began their studies in ESEPA? The answers to these

questions need to be compared with each other and with the meaning that

students assign to the concepts of character formation.

Data Gathering Method

Rather than personal interviews, the data for this study was collected

through use of a survey that was twice administered. The first survey was

conducted in August 2006 at the beginning of a fifteen week course entitled

The Formation of Godly Leaders in which the theory of virtue ethics with its

focus on *telos*, narrative, community, virtues, and practices was explained and

applied to theological education and specific leadership issues. In June 2007,

six months after the course had ended, the same survey was administered to

the students by email in order to discover any substantive changes of

attitudes, expectations, and perspectives. As we explained in chapter one, the

choice of a survey instead of the use of interviews with students resides in the

cultural phenomenon known as *quedar bien*, which roughly translated means

"to save face."[1] Culturally, Costa Ricans are careful not to speak in frank terms

with authority figures for fear of eliciting disapproval and losing face. The

obvious implication is that, as an authority figure, a professor should not

conduct personal interviews with students for purposes of research, especially

when he teaches the class on which his research is based. To do so is to place

students in a position where they feel obligated to color their comments in a

manner that will please the professor out of fear that truthful comments will

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[1] Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, Richard Biesanz, and Karen Zubris Biesanz , *The Ticos: Culture and Social Change in Costa Rica* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1999) 9 and 76.

affect their final grade or, worse, they will not *quedar bien* with the professor. Consequently, the survey, which places some distance between the professor and the student, was chosen in order avoid distorting the study from the outset.

Data was also gathered by means of a data log in which critical reflections were registered by the professor in order to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of the course and to record what he had learned as a consequence of teaching the course. Through the means of the data log the professor engaged in the collection of data as a participant observer, monitoring the students' reactions to the subject matter and learning activities that he had employed.

Survey

The following is the survey that was used to gather data. The survey consists of twelve questions. Only five are used for the analysis of the data. The remaining questions are of a general nature that serves to make the survey appear more extensive than it is. The questions are 1, 4, and 6, which focus on the students' definitions of key terms, while questions 3 and 10 concentrate on students' expectations.

1. Let's suppose that you encounter a person you know on the street or at some social gathering and you say to yourself, "This is a spiritual person." What characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle does this person possess that make you recognize him as a spiritual person?

2. In your own experience of spiritual formation, who are the people who have most influenced you, and what characterized their life?

3. When you began your studies at ESEPA, did you know that character formation was one of the seminary's objectives?

4. For you, what does the word "character" mean?

5. What do you understand by the phrase "the formation of character?"

6. What is the difference, if any, between the concept of character formation and spiritual formation?

7. What does the term "values" mean?

8. What does the term "virtue" mean?

9. Off the top of your head, lists as many virtues as you can remember.

10. When you began your studies at ESEPA, what expectations did you have concerning the school's role in the formation of your character?

11. In what manner has your spiritual life been impacted during the time of your studies in ESEPA?

12. Can you suggest a way that ESEPA might adjust or make more effective its present program to form the character of its students?

Questions 1, 4, and 6 are designed to measure the students' coherence or dissonance by asking them to define "spirituality," "character," "spiritual formation," and "character formation." Question 1 seeks to draw out of the students their understanding of spirituality by having them describe what characteristics a "spiritual person" possesses. Question 4 is straightforward and allows us to compare the students' understanding of character with spirituality. Question 6 follows along the same line of reasoning. If a student does not see a difference between character and spiritual formation and his answers to question 1 and 4 are the same or similar, then his thinking is congruent. If a student thinks that there is a difference between character formation and spiritual formation, question 6 asks him to describe that difference. This may bring to light a basic misunderstanding of the terms, or it may just reveal a difference of degree and not substance. In any event, by

comparing the different definitions given in question 6 against the answers that were given in questions 1 and 4, we can ferret out any further similarities and differences that exist in the student's thinking. Question 3 is directed at students' prior knowledge of ESEPA's objective to form character, while question 10 asks them to reveal their expectations concerning the role that ESEPA would play in the formation of their character before they began their studies. The answers to question 3 will give us some indication of how prior knowledge of the seminary's objective helped shape the students' expectations when compared to question 10. For the purpose of comparison, in the second survey question 10 was adjusted to reflect the fact that the students had taken the course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, and as a consequence they were asked to register their expectations in light of the completion of the course.

Analysis of Data

Each student's survey was analyzed by comparing their answers to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, and 10 in the manner described above. After each individual survey was analyzed, all the surveys were compared to each other in order to note similarities and divergences and a summary of findings was written. Also, since the second survey was taken after the students had finished the course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, whenever students made mention in the first survey of any element of virtue ethics, it was simply noted for the sake of reference in order to have a basis to compare with their answers to survey two. The second survey was analyzed in the same way as first survey. Each individual survey was studied, after which comparisons

were made between the student's responses in the first survey. When each

student's survey had been evaluated, a summary of the findings was written

and compared with the summary findings of the first survey. In addition, the

reflections registered in the data log were analyzed and compared with the

analyzed data gathered through the survey. The analysis and comparison of

data gathered from both the survey and data log served to draw out

conclusions and to make recommendations for further study.

<center>The Class</center>

A key element in this study is the class, *The Formation of Godly*

Leaders, which was offered the last trimester of 2005 and ran from August 5

to December 10. The course was a three credit elective course which met on

Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 11:30. The class spotlighted the theory of virtue

ethics with its focus on *telos*, narrative, community, virtues, and practices.

The theory was explained and applied to theological education and specific

leadership issues. While all the elements of virtue ethics were described and

applied, particular attention was given to community and the nature of

narrative, especially the interface between biblical and personal narratives. In

order to appreciate the function of narrative and to experience the formative

power of community, the class time was divided up between two hours of

lecture and one hour of small group interaction in which the students shared

their personal narrative with their classmates. Readings for the course

consisted of works written by Dallas Willard, Oswald Sanders, and C. S.

Lewis. The students were required to write a book review based on the *4Mat*

form that summarizes the content of the book and chooses one theme from

the book that has helped them in some particular way. They also kept a journal and at the end of course wrote a personal evaluation based on what they had learned. It was hoped that the lectures, readings, class time, and assignments directed at personal reflection would give the students opportunity to conceptualize character formation and, in a small measure, experience it over the course of the semester.

Student Profile

Eight students, 5 women and 3 men, enrolled in the course. The ages of the students ranged from 18 to 42, with an average age of 32. Five students (4 females and 1 male) had already earned professional degrees in other areas of study, while the other 3 students (1 female and 2 males) had not yet earned a university degree or entered into a professional career. All students but one were studying part-time at ESEPA, and they all commuted to the school. The breakdown of the students in terms of class standing is as follows: 3 freshmen, 1 sophomore, 2 juniors, and 2 seniors. The following is a brief sketch of each student. Their names have been changed in order to protect their anonymity.

➢ Jenny is an eighteen year old single female who is pursuing part-time a B.A. degree in Cross Cultural Missions. Concurrently with her studies at ESEPA she is pursuing a degree in elementary education at the University of Costa Rica. She took the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, in the second semester of her freshman year at ESEPA.

➢ Sally is in her early forties, a single professional female, who holds degrees in law and business communication from the University of Costa Rica.

She works full-time as a business executive and is a part-time student in ESEPA. The class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders* was one of her first.

➤ Karen is in her early forties, a single professional Costa Rican female who holds a doctorate of Veterinary Science from the University of Moscow in Russia. She is a part-time student and works full-time as a veterinarian. The class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, was one of her first at ESEPA.

➤ Roger is a 21 year old Costa Rican male, who is a part-time student enrolled in the Certificate in Youth Ministries, a two year program of studies. Concurrently with his studies at ESEPA, Roger is an engineering student at the University of Costa Rica. Because of his part-time status, he has studied in ESEPA for 4 years. The semester that he took the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, was his last course; he graduated at the end of the semester.

➤ Richard is a thirty-five year old single full-time male student from Colombia; he is in his second year of studies pursuing a B.A. in Pastoral Ministry. Before entering ESEPA, he earned a B.A. in Administration of Agro-Enterprises from a Colombian university. On weekends, Roger participates in the Campus Crusade evangelistic ministry showing the *Jesus Film*.

➤ Alice is a single Peruvian female in her mid-thirties. She holds a B.A. degree in Computer Science; she is employed part-time and serves as a leader in a congregation that she helped to plant. She is a part-time student pursuing a B.A. in Christian Education. Alice is in her junior year, but it has taken 9 years of part-time studies to reach this point.

- Cecilia is a Costa Rican female in her early forties. She is married and has one child. She holds a degree in Tourism and Human Relations. At the time she took the course she was in her junior year pursuing a B.A. in Pastoral Ministry. Cecilia is a part-time student who has studied in ESEPA for 6 years. She serves as an associate pastor, overseeing the women's ministry in a large suburban church.

- George is a single twenty-five year old Costa Rican male. He is a full-time student in ESEPA and serves as a volunteer youth pastor in a large suburban church. Given that the majority of students attend ESEPA part-time, he is one of the few students who have earned a B.A. in Pastoral Ministry in four years. The semester that he took the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, was his last. He graduated at the end of the semester.

CHAPTER FIVE
DATA DISPLAY

Introduction

In the following discussion, we present the data taken from the first and second surveys, and our data log. The first half of this chapter concerns the information that we collected from the surveys. We analyzed each student's survey individually, comparing their responses to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, and 10, and noting the congruence and divergence of their answers. In order to display the students' understanding of character formation and their expectations of the seminary's involvement in the formation of their character, the information gathered from the surveys was grouped together under the general headings of "definitions" and "prior knowledge." After we analyzed each individual survey, we compared them to each other, noting the similarities and divergences among the group as a whole. We analyzed the second survey in the same manner as first survey and compared the summary findings from both surveys in order to evaluate any change in perspective brought about by the course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*. The second half of this chapter deals with the observations and reflections that we registered in our data log. The analysis and comparison of data gathered from both the survey and data log served to draw out conclusions and to make recommendations for further study.

1. *Jenny*

<u>Definitions</u>

In her response to question 1, Jenny demonstrates a good deal of dissonance. On the one hand, her definition is positive, almost idealistic: "In general, [spiritual people] are always at the service of others." But she quickly shifts her comments toward the negative encounters she has had with those who claim to be spiritual. As she sees it, they are arrogant and closed-minded: "But from my personal experience and from comments that I have heard, those who see themselves as 'spiritual' are so holy that they are beyond the reach of 'common people.' They are not very open to others." She goes on to say that these people are "mystics," that is, they are impractical and ethereal. As would be expected, Jenny's definition of spirituality diverges significantly from her definition of character. In itself, her definition of character is good. As she puts it, "Character is the formation of a person in all the different areas of his life: the spiritual, the physical, and in knowledge." Here she unites spirituality with character by classifying the former as a subset of the latter. Her positive outlook of character in her response to question 4 diverges significantly from her definition of spirituality. Since Jenny sees spirituality in a negative manner, it is not surprising that she understands character and spirituality as separate concepts. Nonetheless, her response to question 6 does not vary from her definition of character. "I believe that character formation includes the spiritual, character being a more encompassing concept and the spiritual an essential part of it." The separation that Jenny makes between character and spiritual

formation may only be a sign that she intuitively knows that the two concepts are somehow combined, but she is uncertain as to how they are connected. Significantly, Jenny makes no reference to scripture nor does she demonstrate an understanding of basic Christian doctrine.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

Jenny states that she had no prior knowledge of ESEPA's goal to shape the character of its students. Nonetheless, she did enter ESEPA with high expectations to be spiritually formed. She writes, "I wanted to learn and to know more about God; this was my strongest desire when I entered ESEPA. I wanted this in order to have a clearer vision of him and in this way make him known to others who need him." Jenny's expectations are admirable. She makes a clear connection between her studies and the formation of her character.

2. Sally

Definitions

For Sally, the concept of a "spiritual person" carries only a negative weight. As she sees it, those who think they are spiritual are egotistic, selfish, critical, and censorious because, as she states, "They think that the have a closer relationship to God than others." In contradiction to this blistering definition of spirituality, she sees character in a very positive light: "For me character has to do with the distinctive features of my behavior such as humility, the capacity to love, and the capacity to share with others." While her response leans toward the secular, since it makes no reference to God or the scriptures, it is quite good. Like Jenny, and for the same reason, Sally differentiates spiritual formation from character formation, although the distinction she makes is relatively subtle. She expands

her definition of character by defining character formation in more religious overtones. Consequently, character formation is "the pattern of behavior that conforms to the character of God." Spiritual formation, on the other hand, has to do with her personal knowledge of God, that is, it "has to do with growth in my knowledge of God and my relationship with him." This is a telling comment and shows divergence in Sally's thinking. How can she be conformed to the character of God without at the same time growing in her personal relationship with him?

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

Sally's response to question 3 and 10 demonstrates a high degree of incongruence. With respect to ESEPA's goal to form the character of its students, Sally responded by writing, "Yes, and I believe that it is indispensable in order to grow and learn." Yet she answers question 10 by stating, "Honestly, my expectations are in the area of knowledge, believing that spiritual formation belongs to the church. However, it fascinates me to think that that ESEPA is concerned about spiritual formation and not just academic formation. Yet for me, I am looking for growth in knowledge, and I hope to also grow in the realm of the spiritual." It should be pointed out that question 3 does use the word "character," while question 10 uses the word "spiritual," and it is obvious that she makes a distinction between them. She places into discrete categories cognitive knowledge and spiritual knowledge, thus uncoupling the academic study of theology from character formation. Sally's pre-understanding of education trumps her prior knowledge of the seminary's goal; since spiritual formation belongs to the church, it is unnecessary to assume that the school will undertake to make formation an integral part of the program.

3. *Karen*

<u>Definitions</u>

Karen associates a "spiritual person" with Christian argot and socially inappropriate behavior. Her comments are as searing as Sally's: "In the first place, it [spiritual] is a manner of speaking; they address each other as 'brother' or 'sister' and use words like 'vision' and 'servant', or they go about with their Bibles in places or on occasions that seem completely out of place." Unlike her response to question 1, her response to question 4 is positive and her definition of character fundamentally sound: "It is to have one's own identity in which, no matter what others say, one is not carried along by their opinions." Here she echoes an important aspect of character formation pointed out by Hunter: to abide by one's moral conviction in the face of temptation or adversity.

Karen does distinguish character formation from spiritual formation. The first she defines in almost identical terms with her definition of the word character: it is the moral courage to persevere in social situations where one is pressured to throw aside conviction. Spiritual formation, on the other hand, is the manner in which "one behaves when confronted with difficult situations or people, that is, not to be judgmental, or to think evil [thoughts]." Admittedly, the difference in definitions is slight. The first places more emphasis on the courage to be, while the latter accentuates the attitudes that a person displays when responding to negative situations or difficult people. Like Jenny and Sally, Karen comprehends spirituality and spiritual formation as significantly divergent concepts.

Karen states that she had no prior knowledge of ESEPA's objective until she attended the new student orientation. In regard to her expectations, Karen's ignorance of scripture and her inability to answer the questions of her non-Christian friends motivated her to study at ESEPA. As she says, "I wanted to know more about God and the books of the Bible in order to be able to speak with non-Christians." She was also hungry for personal growth, particularly a frame of reference for self-understanding: "I wanted personal growth. I wanted to understand more about my thoughts before I became a Christian and after becoming one." When we compare this last comment with Karen's desire to understand and defend her faith (perhaps as a way to distance herself from "spiritual people") and with her definitions of character and spiritual formation, in which she emphasizes self-identity and moral courage, it is apparent that she entered ESEPA at a crucial juncture in her life's journey. Her unawareness of ESEPA's goal did not adversely affect her expectations, since she came to the seminary anticipating both intellectual and spiritual growth with which she makes a clear connection to scripture.

4. Richard

Definitions

Richard's conception of a spiritual person, although reflecting the New Testament's idea of a servant-hood, comes close to defining spirituality as geniality. Hence a spiritual person is one "whose speech is pleasant, edifying, and constructive. The person would be humble in the way he speaks and acts." For Richard, a truly spiritual person would have a social conscience: "He is

compassionate toward the less fortunate." Crowning these qualities, the person "would have a solid biblical knowledge."

If Richard's definition of spirituality emphasizes its gentler side, his definition of character brings forward its sturdier side. Character is "one's response to the different eventualities of life, its problems, motivations, triumphs, failures and the tasks of daily living." Richard does differentiate character formation from spiritual formation, claiming that spiritual formation is "more profound" than character formation, since it deals with how God uses life's difficulties to create in us the desire to follow ardently in his ways. The differences Richard's sees between character formation and spiritual formation are more apparent than real. Like Jenny, Sally, and Karen, Richard unconsciously recognizes that character and spirituality are connected at some level, but he is unable to say how. He has a good grasp of several aspects of character formation and he makes a direct connection with biblical knowledge and virtues.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

Richard states that he was unaware of ESEPA's objective. In response to question 3 he simply states, "No." But he goes on to state, "I began to study at ESEPA in order to know more about God." Apparently, it would not have made any difference if he had known about ESEPA's objective. His response to question 10 is congruent with his answer to question 3: "I wanted to know more history about the Bible and about God." But he goes on to add, "I never united the idea of spiritual formation with biblical knowledge." This is a shocking response that reveals a yawning gap in Richard's comprehension of the knowledge of God and character formation. Furthermore, it diverges significantly from the answers that

he gave above, especially when answering question 1, in which he states that a spiritual person is one who has a solid knowledge of the Bible. This disjunction is so striking that he must mean that the biblical knowledge that a spiritual person has is substantially different from that which can be obtained through formal studies. In any event, Richard's pre-understanding of academic studies has certainly shaped his expectations.

5. Alice

Definitions

For Alice, there is an indissoluble link between spirituality and character that fastens together individual and social dimensions of a person's life. As she says, spiritual people are recognized in "the way they speak, their behavior, their reactions to circumstances, and the role they fulfill within society. They should be consistent with what they preach and who they are." Her responses to question 1, 4, and 6 are all congruent. She defines character, as "the way one makes decisions, the manner in which one assumes responsibilities, and one's reaction to circumstances whether bad or good." She does not make reference to theology or to the Bible. In response to question 6, Alice finds absolutely no difference between the concepts of spiritual formation and character formation, since "humans are whole beings."

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

Alice came to ESEPA expecting character formation. Her expectation was based on the fact that she was going to attend a Christian institution of higher learning. In answer to question 3 she states, "Yes, I knew, but not from what I had read, but rather because I think that it is only natural to expect this from a

center of Christian study." Her personal expectations when she entered ESEPA were high and pragmatic. As she states, "I was hoping to know more about the experience of others living what the word of God teaches. Also, I wanted to acquire useful information in order to implement it in my life."

6. *Cecilia*

Definitions

Much like Alice, Cecilia's responses to questions 1, 4, and 6 are highly congruent. Reflecting a solid evangelical understanding of discipleship, she connects spirituality with character when she writes, "One's character must reflect many attitudes such as moderation and love. That is, a person must have the character of Christ." Her response to question 4 coheres well with her answer to question 1. As she states, "Character is a person who is mature, who has the capacity in whatever circumstance to maintain self-control, to act in a serene manner." In her response to question 6, she states that she sees no difference between character formation and spiritual formation. In her answers to both questions 1 and 4, Cecilia emphasizes that, for her, maturity of character has to do with temperance or personal restraint. Here she echoes Hunter's definition of character that stresses personal self-restraint, but she sees this in terms of serenity without reference to community or moral attachment. On the whole, Cecilia's responses show a high degree of congruence.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

In answering question three, Cecilia not only acknowledges that she is aware of ESEPA's desire to shape the character of its students, but is confident that the school has impacted her life. As she says in response to question 3, "Yes,

and I believe that it has had its desired effect on me." With regard to her expectations concerning character formation, she states, "I expected that I was going to change for the better in many things that needed to be improved." She does not specify in what areas she expected to change. Her expectations are high and she has not been disappointed with the results.

7. *Roger*

Definitions

In his response to question 1, Roger gives three staccato responses. In his first response he makes a connection between theology and spirituality when he states simply that a "spiritual person would abundantly demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit." Second, such a person would "evidence devotional habits," which he does not define, but presumably they are Bible reading and prayer. Third, he adds that a spiritual person would also "have a certain charisma that would distinguish him from others, even though one might not be able to explain why." What he means by charisma is not clear. Apparently, it is a quality of personality or personal influence rather than the presence of the Holy Spirit. This coheres with his definition of character, which he says is "an aspect of an individual's personality, perhaps the interior part." It should be noted that in Spanish the word "character", in certain contexts, means something like personality. If Roger is equating character with personality, he is also linking it with spirituality, for in his response to question 6 he writes, "There is no difference. What happens is that we restrict spiritual formation to a religious ambit."

In response to question 3, he honestly states, "Yes, I had read that, but never paid it any attention." His response to question 3 is congruent with his answer to question 10: "I never had any clear expectation with respect to character formation." The reason for his low expectation lies in his perception of the function of education. As he continues to say, "I think what happens is that as students we don't enter the seminary with the purpose of being formed in our character." Consequently, Roger's pre-understanding of education has definitely influenced his expectation for character formation. Formal theological education can be set apart as a separate entity apart from character formation. The disjunction that Roger makes between formal theological education and character formation was already in play before he began his studies in ESEPA. He does, however, place the responsibility for his low expectation upon himself instead of the institution.

8. George

Definitions

George defines a spiritual person as one who "demonstrates kindness, is cordial, and in some manner reflects God's participation in the affairs of his daily life. The person serves God and communicates what he lives with God." His definition of character is consistent with his answer to question 1, defining character as "daily behavior." But he adds without comment that character "has to do with a worldview and personality." The mention of worldview comes close to the use of meta-narrative found in virtue ethics. The mention of personality reflects, as it does with Roger, the polyvalent meaning of the Spanish word

'character.' In his response to question 6, George becomes vague. The difference between character formation and spiritual formation "depends on the significance of the word, 'spiritual.' If it refers to the 'spirit', then it is the framework for the formation of character." It is unclear by this response what meaning George intends by the word 'spirit,' whether it refers to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit. Presumably, it refers to the latter, and as such he makes character formation a subset of spiritual formation. This division between the two formations may mean nothing more than the fact that George recognizes, at least intuitively, that Christian character formation finds its definition in the biblical story.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

George's responses to questions 3 and 10 are congruent. With reference to his prior knowledge of ESEPA's objective, George flatly states, "No, I don't think anyone ever explained that to me, and if I read it I don't remember it." This response is disquieting, since, at the time, George had all but completed four year B.A. in Pastoral Ministry. In response to question 10, which asks about his expectations, he states, "I had none. I thought only of entering [ESEPA] in order to learn to preach." Like his classmates, George disconnects character formation from academic studies. Most disconcerting is the division he makes between character formation and preaching, making theological education a matter of technique. In his answers to the questions concerning the definition of character, George demonstrates a fairly solid understanding; nonetheless, he had very little expectation that his time of study at ESEPA would serve as a catalyst to shape his character.

Summary of First Survey

Definitions

The students have divergent opinions concerning the characteristics of a spiritual person. Those who see spirituality in a positive light remark that a spiritual person evinces behaviors such as friendliness, consistency when confronting difficult circumstances, and integrity, particularly in the role that one plays in society. Spirituality is characterized by love, compassion for the poor, and inner peace or equanimity. The religious habits that typify a spiritual person include a solid biblical knowledge, the fruit of the Spirit, and the character of Christ. Noteworthy is the students' emphasis upon language as a measure of one's spirituality. They judge the quality of one's speech by how it edifies others.

Surprisingly, Jenny, Sally, and Karen diverge completely from this positive picture of spirituality. They interpret spirituality in an off-putting manner because of the arrogant and critical way supposedly spiritual persons treat others. As they see it, a "spiritual person" is legalistic, hypocritical, proud, possessing a critical attitude toward others, and is contemptuous of those who disagree with his point of view. This negative point of view does not proceed from a biblically informed understanding of false spirituality, but from the interactions that these students have had with persons who identify themselves as being "spiritual." Each is reflecting on people they know whose spirituality is narrow and fault-finding. Jenny, however, shows a degree of ambivalence in her response to question 1. She first writes that spiritual persons are "always at the service of others." But she then quickly amends this definition by citing her negative

experiences. One common link between these students is their recent enrollment into ESEPA. Each is a freshman. This may mean nothing more than the three of them happened to take the same class. Or it may mean that, given time to process their ideas of spirituality in light of their theological studies, they will be more discerning in their understanding of spirituality by taking the class. Hopefully, there will be a measured difference in their attitude after they have taken the course.

When compared laterally, there is a good deal of congruence among the students' definition of character. Most underscored the importance of how a person takes on daily responsibilities and the decisions he makes during difficult circumstances. Similarly, mention is made of the importance of pure motives and the manner in which a person handles success. Other answers emphasize the formation of strong convictions, personal identity, maturity, integrity, and consistency. All of these are first-rate answers and fit well into a general definition of character. Yet the definitions are not specifically Christian, since none of the students made any specific reference to scripture, theology or Christian tradition. Comparing answers to question 1, the definition of spirituality, with responses to question 4, half of the members of the class defined character in a congruent way with their definition of spirituality; variances were only ones of degree. Not surprisingly, the greatest divergence was among those who understood spirituality in negative terms.

Alice, Cecilia, and Roger saw no difference between character and spiritual formation, and their response is consistent with their responses to questions 1 and 4. The remaining students differentiate the two expressions, either by

making one a subset of the other or by distinguishing one in terms of their personal walk with God and the other in terms of social behavior. Jenny sees spiritual formation as an essential part of the encompassing concept of character formation. Sally, Richard, Karen, and George differentiate character formation from spiritual formation by positing that spiritual formation has to do with a person's relationship with God (the life of prayer and service others), while character formation is the development of the positive characteristics listed above. When we compare these students' definitions of character formation in question 6 with their definitions of character in question 4, the differences are negligible. The same is true when we compare their definitions of character formation and spiritual formation in question 6. As already noted, these students intuitively know that character and spirituality are related, but they are uncertain as to how. As we have noted, modern ethical theory has sought to anchor ethical behavior in universal rational principles stripped of all historical particularity. Consequently, character formation is separated from religious commitment and thought. It would appear that the ambiguity and ambivalence that is evident in these students' responses to question 6 point in the direction of the bifurcation between reason and religion.

While there is a fairly high degree of congruence exhibited among the individual responses to question 1, 4, and 6, there is also a good deal of divergence when responses are compared from among the students. It is obvious that we cannot take for granted that our students understand equally the meaning of character and spirituality. It is hoped that the post-class survey will demonstrate a greater degree of congruence.

Prior Knowledge

The class is evenly split between students having and not having prior knowledge of ESEPA's objective to form character. Alice, Cecilia, Roger, and Sally were aware of ESEPA's mission statement and were in hearty agreement with it. Cecilia's response was extraordinarily positive. She not only knew about this objective, but she also believes that "it has had its desired effect on me." Jenny, Richard, Karen, and George confessed that they had no prior knowledge of ESEPA's objective. Prior knowledge, however, does not appear to have greatly influenced their expectations. Of the four students who were fully aware of ESEPA's goal, Alice, Cecilia, and Sally indicated that they expected the school to be proactive in the area of character formation, while Roger had no such expectation. Of those who were unaware of ESEPA's goal, Jenny and Karen indicated that they had high expectations for personal growth and transformation as a result of their studies, while Richard and George indicated that they did not expect the seminary to be concerned about it. In sum, prior knowledge does not necessarily mean high expectations; neither does the lack of prior knowledge equal a low expectations.

Expectations

In terms of expectations, the students' attitudes tilt toward the negative side of the ledger. The chief reason the students give for not expecting the seminary's active involvement in character formation has to do with their pre-understanding of academic studies: academic institutions like ESEPA exist for the purpose of disseminating knowledge, not the development of character; spiritual formation is the responsibility of the church, not theological education.

As Sally baldly states, "Honestly, my expectations are in the area of knowledge, believing that spiritual formation belongs in the church." While Sally's comment is a healthy reminder of the priority of the church's role in character formation, her separation of theological knowledge from character formation is quite disconcerting. It demonstrates the very fragmentation of which Farley laments in his work on theological education. In Sally's case, since the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, was her first course at ESEPA, her fragmented thinking is not the result of her educational experience in the seminary. As indicated in Sally's profile, before entering ESEPA she had earned two other advanced degrees. Consequently, her expectations appear to be a product of her prior educational experiences and understanding. Sally is not, however, the only student to separate character formation from theological knowledge.

Richard states that, "I never united spiritual formation with biblical knowledge." In many ways, his response is more distressing. While Sally reflects a basic misunderstanding about the proper function of a seminary education, Richard completely severs character formation from biblical knowledge. Of course, this begs the question of how it is possible to be formed in a manner that is uniquely Christian without having biblical knowledge. In another case, George, in addition to separating the academic from the spiritual, takes the next logical step by diminishing the purpose of theological education to mere acquisition of pragmatic abilities. In his case, he writes, "I entered [the seminary] in order to learn how to preach." This, too, is a profound misunderstanding of both the character and the skills needed for ministry. Of course, developing the skills to preach well is important, but preaching must be judged more by the character of

the preacher and the content of the sermons than by the style of delivery. As we outlined in chapter one and two, these students mirror the epistemology of the modern period that detaches objective and subjective knowledge.

Second Survey

We come now to the second survey, which is a six month follow-up to the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*. The survey is identical to the first, except for question 10, which asks the students to record their expectations now that they have taken the course. The survey was distributed to the students by email in June of 2007. Unfortunately, only four students elected to answer the survey. After many attempts to persuade the other four to complete the survey, our cultural informant made it known to us that the students' silence indicated their desire not to participate in the study.

1. Sally

Definitions

In comparison to the first survey, Sally's response to question 1 in the second survey shows a renewed appreciation for the concept of spirituality. Whereas in the first survey she is completely negative, naming the sins of those who call themselves spiritual, in the second survey she outlines a number of virtues that a spiritual person displays. She accentuates the importance of integrity in her definition of spirituality: "Being spiritual is not the same as appearing to be spiritual." Particularly noteworthy is the link she makes between spirituality, the word of God, and active trust in God. Sally is, however, still very sensitive to the negative attitudes of those who mistakenly consider themselves to

be spiritual. Her unconstructive relationship with them led her in the opposite direction. As she writes, "He [a spiritual person] does not judge others as either good or bad, because all this is relative." Consequently, "he does not try to convert others to his religious point of view." Apparently, Sally has suffered from legalistic and/or overzealous believers, and, as a consequence, she has not worked through the issue sufficiently to form an appropriate appreciation for biblical standards and evangelism.

As in the first survey, she defines character in a comprehensive manner, stating that "character has to do with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, in other words, with principles that one reflects to others by a good testimony." This certainly coheres well with her response to question 1. In her response to question 6, Sally continues to differentiate character formation from spiritual formation. Her definition of character formation is consistent with her description of character in question 4, having to do with "the different aspects of a person, not just the spiritual." Spiritual formation, on the other hand, focuses on one's personal relationship with God, which, she notes, "from a Christian point of view has to do with being more like Christ." Overall, Sally's responses to questions 1, 4, and 6 are congruent, and they evidence a change in thinking from the answers she gave on the first survey. While she continues to detach character from spiritual formation, the difference she makes between them is slight.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

In the second survey, Sally states that she did not know that character formation was one of ESEPA's goals. This contradicts what she stated in the first survey, where she not only affirmed a prior knowledge but also asserted it is

indispensable. She qualifies her response in the second survey by adding, "If I had known then I would not have understood it. But with the passing of time I continue to learn what it means." This is a good reminder that prior knowledge of the seminary's goals does not signify comprehension of those goals.

The last question asks to reveal the expectations she now has after taking the course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*. Sally's response is very positive. She writes, "I believe that this course, being one of the first two courses that I have taken at ESEPA, has created the desire to want to grow in my knowledge of God and my relationship with God. It has made me aware that I have a long way to go and much to learn." This is a very encouraging outcome for the course. It should be noted, however, that while theology/biblical knowledge and virtues are obliquely mention, nothing is stated explicitly or implicitly about other features of virtue ethics such as *telos*, community, or praxis that where emphasized in the course.

2. *Karen*

Definitions

Karen's responses to the second survey show a new openness to the idea of spirituality. In the first survey all was negative; spiritual people act foolishly in public by inappropriately calling attention themselves and generally annoying others.   Now Karen describes a spiritual person as courageous, and "he is open to situations that he encounters in life. He able to hold confidences; for example, he is not disturbed by what others say to him in confidence." She continues to be sensitive to the criticism of those who presume to take unto themselves the appellation "spiritual." Like Sally, she reiterates the negative aspects that a

spiritual person avoids: "He does not judge the attitudes and behaviors of those around him." In addition, a spiritual person has prioritized his relational commitments. As she writes, "He is willing to first help his family and then those outside the family who ask for help." But then she adds an interesting twist to this domestic picture: "I say this because many of us have hell in the home, but heaven on the streets." It seems that Karen is tempted to help those outside the family circle before helping those inside it because of her family's dysfunctional temperament. In is in light of this that she notes the need for humility and patience. Consequently, she has made a strong connection between her daily life and spirituality.

Due to a more open stance in defining spirituality in question 1, Karen's definition of character is less divergent. In the first survey, she defined character in terms of individual courage and willpower. In the second survey, she has adjusted her definition to "principles and values put into practice." While this is an adequate definition, as far as it goes, it is abstract and begs for further qualification, which biblical narrative supplies. Also, as in the first survey, Karen remains convinced that there is a difference between spiritual formation and character formation. She affirms that spiritual formation is more conceptual, stating, "It pays attention to the laws, norms, values, principles that God has for each of us." Her definition of character formation, which mirrors her response to question 4, "is adopting these values into my life and putting them into practice in order to be salt and light to the world-- if I consider myself a follower of Christ." In one sense, the difference that Karen makes between character and spiritual formation may be more apparent than real, a difference of emphasis, yet

she divides knowledge and praxis. In this case, the spiritual equals knowledge, while character equals praxis. It should be noted that Karen does not mention important concepts found in virtue ethics such as, *telos*, community, being, habits, or inclinations of heart and mind.

<u>Prior Knowledge and Expectations</u>

Karen's answer to question three is essentially the same as her answer to the first survey, only this time she adds, "The only thing that I knew was that I was going to study theology." In her response to question 10, Karen indicates that the course has challenged her preconceived ideas of theology and, especially, theologians: "Before the course I thought that one converted into a theologian, although the idea struck me as emotionally cold." What Karen means by "to convert into a theologian" is not clear. But it is clear that the prospect was not a good one. Happily, the class helped her to see things differently: "But after beginning the course I came to understand that we have to follow principles and values that only God places in the heart of every person as they continue to study the word." To this she adds a caution that becoming a theologian should be undertaken with care lest it be corrupted by legalism. This response also resonates with the importance Karen places on principles and values and shows a transition in her understanding of the role of theology and character formation.

3. Richard

<u>Definitions</u>

Richard's definition of spirituality in the second survey is nearly identical with his response to question 1. A spiritual person is amiable, altruistic, has

transparent motives and edifying speech. He writes that a spiritual person "is friendly, and reflects a good testimony in his being; his speech and comments are sincere and for the most part edifying. He does not speak with others out of self-interested motives." The definitions in both surveys echo the virtues of kindness, goodness, and gentleness found in the list of the fruit of the Spirit. Richard locates these virtues in the context of community: "A spiritual person most of all demonstrates his spirituality in his relationship with his family and friends." He goes on the say that the measure of spirituality does not reside in the opinion of the person who considers himself spiritual. It inheres, rather, in the affirmation of family and friends, who verify the person's spirituality. There is much in this description that is wholesomely biblical with its emphasis on virtue and community. Yet he makes no direct reference to the community of faith.

In his response to question 4, Richard iterates virtue ethics' emphasis on narrative. "Character," he writes, "is the result of an individual's narrative, his place of origin, his cultural influences, his education and intellect." His definition is correct, but partially so; he leaves unstated other important features of character. Nor does he clarify that personal narrative has saliency only when it is interpreted in light of an overarching narrative. In his response to question 6, Richard continues to differentiate character formation from spiritual formation. The first he sees as a broader category that covers all areas of life—a faint echo of narrative. Spiritual formation, on the other hand, is devotional and focuses on "communion with God that helps form one's character." Taken together, Richard's responses to questions 1, 4, and 6 display evidence of a latent knowledge of the main themes of virtue. This is an encouraging outcome.

Nevertheless, he separates what should be held together. It is difficult to see how the virtues that he mentions as attributes of a spiritual person in question 1 can be separated from character.

<u>Prior Knowledge and Expectations</u>

As in his response to the first survey, Richard admits that he did not know about ESEPA's objective when he entered his program of studies. But he adds a very encouraging comment about his experience at ESEPA: "I believe that in the course of my studies I have seen it [the formation of character] not only in my life but also the life of some of my friends." This stands in sharp contrast to his response in the first survey in which he uncoupled theological studies from character formation.

In regard to the expectations he now has after taking the course, Richard underscores the importance of the seminary as community and mentions his relationship with classmates and professors: "I believe that spending time conversing with my classmates who are pastors with much experience, who have told me of situations they have had to deal with, and spending time with professors, who have much experience, not only in this culture but in others as well, shapes our character in a way that accords with the needs of those with whom we are going to work, whether that be in missions or the pastoral ministry." Although he does not explicitly say that he expects this to continue, his positive response seems to imply that he does. This is a very positive comment and shows how his fellow students and professors participate in the formation of the students' character.

4. George

<u>Definitions</u>

Comparing the first survey with the second, George diverges only in his response to question 1. In the second survey, he rightly emphasizes that spirituality concerns the whole person, but he asserts this without making a reference to God. All other responses are consistent and congruent.

In the first survey, George indicated that a spiritual person is one who is amiable and reflects his relationship with God in his daily life. In the second survey, he defines a spiritual person as one "who develops holistically in every area of his life so as to achieve a balance." This definition coheres closely with his definition of character, which he defines as "the center of one's personality, his convictions, the basis of his behavior and decisions." In addition, George remarks without further comment that, along with integrated wholeness, spirituality "includes a notion of transcending one's reality." By this he may mean nothing more than a spiritual person overcomes life's adversities and challenges. Broadly speaking, George's definitions are very adequate and congruent. It should be noted, however, that his responses are entirely individualistic. There is no mention of the importance of life in community that comprises the arena of true New Testament spirituality. Moreover, he makes no mention of scripture or any of the elements of virtue ethics.

Unlike the first survey in which George was willing to allow a difference between character and spiritual formation, in the second survey he is not willing to make that concession. The two concepts are identical. He does mention, however, that the general perception among Costa Rican evangelicals is to

understand spiritual formation as "only the communion of one's spirit with God and thus the idea of formation focuses on devotional activities," as opposed to daily activities, interactions and relationships. While George's answers are consistent, there is nothing in his responses that is distinctively Christian. Character and spirituality are mentioned without reference to the biblical story or the need for community.

Prior Knowledge and Expectations

As he stated in the first survey, George had no idea that ESEPA wanted to shape the character of its students. Therefore, when he enrolled ESEPA he had no expectation for spiritual growth. Since George had already graduated when he filled out the second survey, he reflects on his time at ESEPA and writes, "If I had taken this course in the beginning, my expectations would have been to make space for the formation of other areas of my life, not just intellectual formation." This is a very positive outcome for the course, but it does show the fragmentation of knowledge.

Summary of Second Survey

The first survey revealed a sharp disagreement among the students over the definition of spirituality. The major fault line ran between those who interpreted spirituality positively and those who viewed it negatively. The second survey did not reveal the same disagreement. It is generally agreed that a spiritual person is intact and growing in every area of his life. He has integrity and is consistent in his actions and words. Sally expressed it best when she wrote, "To be spiritual is not the same thing as appearing to be spiritual." There is

agreement among the students that a spiritual person possesses attributes such as friendliness, altruism, purity of motives, and compassion. They also agree that spirituality focuses on community, family, and social awareness. The area of the widest agreement has to do with one's speech. As in the first survey, the students express that the speech of a truly spiritual person is edifying, friendly, and sincere. Sally and Karen underscore that the truly spiritual person does not indulge in criticism, is not censorious, and refrains from being judgmental.

The first survey revealed a high degree of congruence among the students' definition of character. Similarly, the second survey shows a variety of emphases but no fundamental disagreements. In fact, there is a general consensus on the meaning of idea. In both surveys, character is defined in terms of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, personal convictions, and decisions. In the second survey, Sally and Karen underscore that character deals with principles put into practice. And Richard, picking up one of the emphases of virtue ethics, reported that character has to do with one's personal narrative. In the first survey, the comparison between the responses to question 1 (the definition of spirituality) and question 4 (the definition of character) revealed that the class was split fairly evenly between students whose definition of spirituality and character was congruent and those whose definition diverged. Understandably, the students for whom the idea of "a spiritual person" carried only negative weight did not associate character with spirituality. Unlike the first survey, the second survey did not reveal any significant divergence between the students' definition of spirituality and character. Any dissimilarity was one of degree and not of

substance. The obvious reason for this variance is the change of mind evidenced among those who held negative opinions about the meaning of spirituality.

In their response to question 6, all the students who participated in the second survey had indicated on the first survey that they perceived a difference between character and spiritual formation. In the second survey, only George had a complete change of opinion. Sally and Richard continued to separate character and spiritual formation and explain the differences by making spiritual formation a subset of character formation. For them, the connotation of the word "spiritual" narrowly describes a devout activity directed toward God; it does not appear that they can allow the concept to progress beyond a subjective religious experience. Karen also continues to maintain that there is a difference between character and spiritual formation. In the first survey, her definition of spirituality and spiritual formation diverged, while her definition of character and character formation was congruent. In the second survey, all her definitions were congruent. When comparing the two surveys, there is a notable evolution. In the first survey, her definition of character is earthy; it focused on courage in the midst of adversity. In the second survey, character and spirituality have become more theoretical; they are the practice of laws, norms, values, and principles.

Concerning question 3, no difference was anticipated. Sally's answer in the second survey, however, contradicted her answer in the first survey. The students who participated in the second survey expressed heightened expectations concerning ESEPA's role in character formation.

Data Log

As noted in chapter one, we gathered information by the use of a data log or journal in which we recorded our reflections and insights concerning the viability of selected learning activities and the success or failure to achieve desired outcomes. The learning activities included lecture, assigned readings, book reviews, small group interaction, journals, and self-evaluations. The following is an analysis based on our reflections, insights, and impressions. It is hoped that these considerations will serve the greater purpose of making the class, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*, a more viable prototype that will serve the needs of other theological institutions.

Background of Theological Education

The first four classes of the course were designed to introduce the concept of character formation, the need for it in leadership development, and its importance in theological education. These classes were intended to set the parameters of the course and to clear the playing field of any misconceptions of the terms that we used in the course. In the first class, we planted the idea that the general purpose of theological education is the training of godly Christian leaders. Where this notion is missing, it is necessary to reconfigure our conception of theological education. We noted that the popular notion of seminary is often looked upon as a place where aspiring Christian leaders lose their zeal for Christian ministry. (The words *seminary* and *cemetery* also rhyme in Spanish—*seminario* and *cementerio*.) It was explained how this popular bias against formal theological training affects our perception of its purpose. In some cases, developing Christian leaders avoid formal theological education out of fear

that they will lose their zest for the practical aspects of ministry to an overly argumentative interest in theological minutiae. Others, suspicious that theological education might draw them away from the simplicity of their relationship with Christ, enter their studies with a great deal of caution; their guard is up and they can become overly resistant to any teaching that appears too complex for the average church-going Christian. It was explained that one of the contributing factors to these attitudes may very well be the loss of focus on character formation within theological education. This loss tends to create an unwanted separation between academic and personal knowledge, the second of which is indispensable for the formation of character.

The students resonated with this general description of the reasons why theological education is often minimized by certain sectors of the evangelical church in Costa Rica. It gave voice to their intuited observations of the same phenomena and opened up a fruitful discussion of the fears that some had when they enrolled in ESEPA.

At this point we introduced Farely's study on the historical changes in education that came about through the influence of the Enlightenment with its shift from *paideia* to *Wissenschaft*, which resulted in the fragmentation of knowledge. We sought to emphasize that the tension that one perceives between theoretical and practical knowledge is systemic, and has it roots in the manner in which theological education has been conceived and structured. This information sparked a lively discussion among those students who had previously studied at ESEPA. Roger and George, for example, stated that the knowledge of the historical development of theological education had given them a way to

understand and express what they had experienced during their time at ESEPA. They commented that, in their opinion, some courses, notably inductive Bible study (!), leaned more in the direction of W*issenschaft* than *paideia*. They also noted that the fourfold division was not only reinforced by the ESEPA's curricular design, but also by the attitudes and the emphases that professors gave to their area of expertise. George expressed his desire to have had this information made available to him when he began his studies. It was clear, however, that not every student perceived the same need. Karen and Sally, who were just beginning their studies at ESEPA, did not share George's enthusiasm for the subject. By their account, it was interesting but not necessarily relevant. While it is not untypical for students to display varying degrees of interest in a subject, it does raise the challenge to seek ways that ignite an interest in those who are attentive to the subject under discussion but who do not necessarily see its relevance. In this case, appreciating the relevance of the historical development of theological education hung on the students' prior educational experience at ESEPA.

In order to have made this subject more engaging for those who had just begun their theological studies, it may have been useful to have given more attention the problems generated by objectivism, as outlined by Parker Palmer. Particularly germane is Parker's discussion on how modern education's hidden curriculum shapes its conceptual framework. According to him, objective facts, which stand outside the realm of the learner's experience, are prized over the need to personally embrace truth. Bringing to light the interplay between learning and the need for pledging their troth to truth may have opened a whole new door for the students to comprehend the purpose of theological education.

At minimum, it may have helped the students reflect upon their prior educational experience and how that experience has influenced their perception of theological education. Moreover, while the distinction between *paideia* and W*issenschaft* appeared to be clearly understood, it would have been more enlightening for the students for us to have illustrated the differences between the two forms of education by briefly presenting the same teaching from both perspectives. This would have given the students a real taste of the differences between the two forms of pedagogy.

The students displayed interest in the presentation of Dr. Goodwin's template for Christian leadership and James Hunter's definition of character. They also responded positively to the brief teaching on biblical calling, especially the logical sequence of being called to be a child of God before being called to serve in a particular ministry. However, the lesson on the importance of character for Christian leaders provoked a spontaneous and passionate sharing of the worst accounts of Christian leaders whose lack of character had disqualified them from ministry. The intensity of students' responses resided in the personal anguish they had experienced as a consequence of their leader's impropriety. While we felt that it was vital to briefly hear out their stories, we did not allow the desire to expose the sins of others to overtake the central focus of the class. The lecture was not designed to inflame latent resentment but to underscore the positive outcomes brought about by leaders who demonstrate the qualities of Christian character.

In reflecting on this response, it caused us to wonder how many students, who have been hurt by the unseemly behavior of Christian leaders or church

members, had entered theological studies with an unconsciously suppressed desire to set things right within the Christian community. Where this is the case, the students' focus on theological knowledge would be directed not at the formation of those personal qualities that build up the community of faith, but on the acquisition of personal power through theological knowledge in order to coerce change. Of course, where this is the case, such a focus corrupts theological knowledge and short-circuits any attempt to form Christian character. Left undetected, an unconscious push to set aright past wrongs can lead to a pessimistic outlook, laced with the corrosive poison of cynicism, especially when the attempt to bring about change is rebuffed. In itself, this question would be an interesting subject of investigation that would provide more insight into the students' attitudes concerning character formation, leading to practical steps that would enhance ESEPA's efforts to form character.

<div align="center">The Introduction of Virtue Ethics</div>

As has been seen in the literature review, the essential elements of virtue ethics require careful explanation. We decided that it was important to introduce the concept of virtue ethics before plunging into a biblical exposition of character. In presenting the broad contours of virtue ethics it was imperative to introduce these very abstract elements in a comprehensible manner, as we did not want the students to interpret the theory as too theoretical to be practicable. After serious consideration, we decided to introduce the subject by using sports illustrations similar to those found in James McClendon's work on ethics. In the introductory lecture on virtue ethics, we brought into the classroom a baseball, a football, a soccer ball, and a chess set. Each item was held up and questions were asked

along the following lines: "When playing baseball, is one allowed to tackle the player who is running the bases?" The answer, of course, was no. When asked why not, the students answer that tackling is not part of the game of baseball. Similar questions were asked about football and soccer. In regard to playing chess we asked, "Is it necessary to roll dice in order to move a knight or bishop?" Again the same answers were given for the same reason.

This learning activity not only piqued the students' interest in the lecture, but it also allowed us to explain how the nature of games helps us comprehend the elements virtue ethics. Games have a goal or *telos*, the rules of the game constitute what a game is and are constitutive aspect of the games *telos*. Games are inherently social activities and require virtue to play well; games also have a history or a narrative. In regard to the history of games, it was pointed out that American football developed from the British game of rugby and that British and European missionaries, who worked among teenagers, introduced soccer to Latin America.

After introducing the subject in this manner, we gave an exposition of the Ten Commandments using the elements of virtue ethics as a grid. While the illustration of games and exposition on the Ten Commandments helped most students to warm up the subject of virtue ethics, some still struggled with its abstractness. After explaining again the concepts, we asked these students to exercise the virtue of patience, assuring them that the concepts would become more understandable as the course moved forward. In light of the results of the second survey, it is open to question whether the students had indeed understood the theory of virtue ethics. The fact that very little was mentioned about the

contours of virtue ethics in the second survey may be due to the makeup of the survey; it did not specifically ask the students to give an exposition of virtue ethics. It may mean that the students possess a latent knowledge of the main elements of virtue ethics which they could call upon if they were to read an article or have a conversation on the subject. Although we did not ask for the information, it could possibly mean that the students remember the illustrations more than what was being illustrated. Whatever the reason for the scant mention of virtue ethics on the second survey, it does call into question the efficacy of the learning activities that we employed in the class.

Since narrative is such an essential component of virtue ethics, we dedicated one third of the class time to exploring its significance. As was stated in chapter one, the course was designed to pay particular attention to the nature of narrative, especially the interface between the biblical meta-narrative and personal narrative. In order to explore how personal narrative is taken up and understood in light of an overarching narrative, the students were asked to write out their life story, focusing on how the gospel had shaped their personal narrative. The students were required to share their narrative with the other members of the class, highlighting, as much as possible, how God had taken up their story into his redemptive engagement in the world. Since there were only eight students, in essence the class functioned like a small cell group. It was hoped that this learning activity would bring to life the whole concept of how narrative functions to form our identity and shape our character by giving us a transcendent viewpoint from which to understand our life. It was also hoped that

the weekly small group encounter would create a sense of community among the students.

The students displayed a good deal of discomfort during the first two small group encounters. This was especially true for Sally and Karen, who were the first to share their story. They commented on the feelings of awkwardness and embarrassment from having to tell the story of their life to complete strangers. As the semester continued, however, the students began to relax and to interact in a less self-consciousness manner; they also started to spend longer periods of time interacting with each other, both in and outside of the classroom. A sense of group identity began to form around the class. Throughout the semester, the students made many positive comments about how the small group experience had impacted their self-perception. For them, the idea that God is active in the formation of their personal narrative gave them considerable delight.

The group activity had secondary effects: the sharing of personal narrative brought to the surface many strong emotions. It was not unusual for a student to weep as he shared painful past memories. Since traumatic experiences played a key role in the development of their life's narrative, some students shared disturbing information of abuse and abandonment. Of course, this information, and the intensity of emotion with which it was shared, caused a good deal of discomfort for some of the students. We anticipated this; and in order to head off problems, before the small group sessions began, we underscored the need for respect and confidentiality. We made it clear that the group was not a counseling session and that the group members needed to avoid taking the role of a therapist. If a student struggled to square a distressing memory with God's

redemptive designs, he was free to leave the subject until a future date when he might achieve a clearer perspective on the event. If one elected to do so, the students were directed to respect the student's choice and not to feel the need to force a theological meaning on the event. In addition, we instructed the students that when they felt uncomfortable because of what was being shared, they should avoid the temptation to change the subject or in any way short-circuit the difficult process of reviewing one's life narrative. We made it especially clear that, if for any reason there was a need for intervention, it was our responsibility to do so. Also, in order to demonstrate what was expected and to set the tone for sharing one's story, we began the activity by sharing our personal narrative.

The sharing of personal narrative in a small group context appeared to be a successful learning activity. It did create a sense of community. The telling and hearing each one's personal narrative gave us entrée into each others lives; it encouraged us to move beyond publicly polite social interchanges and the social roles assigned to us by our participation in an academic institution. Knowing each person's narrative unquestionably helped us all to see each other in a more holistic manner, as companions with unique histories who are sojourning toward the same goal. The small group interaction became the focal point of the class; it created a sense of heightened anticipation.

It is in light of this apparent success and the students' pleasure in the class that it is so surprising that in the second survey only scant mention is made concerning narrative. This has caused us to probe the supposed efficacy of the small group experience. It raises questions, such as, did the opportunity to share the intimate details of one's life, and the emotions that they evoked, override the

purpose of the learning activity? Did the sense of community that formed around this experience shift attention away from the gospel narrative to focusing on our immediate experience, thus, in effect, causing us to pay more attention to ourselves? Did the temporary experience of community, which required no long-term commitment, generate an emotional effervescence that left only a residue of good feelings without planting a firm knowledge of our lives being taken up into God's redemptive story? On the surface, this appears to be the case. Also, it should be asked if the change from a more formal to a less formal class format affected the seriousness with which the students dealt with subject. That is, did the informality of the group time create an atmosphere in which the students regarded with less gravity the formal lectures and readings? These are important questions that need to be kept in mind the next time the course is taught. We continue to believe that the small group activity is appropriate learning activity, but caution needs to be exercised so that the activity does not shift the focus of the class toward an intense inward gaze and away from the emphasis on seeing our lives as part of the transcendent narrative of God's redemptive engagement in the world.

With regard to the course readings, the selections on virtue from C. S. Lewis' work, *Cristianismo...¡y nada más!* (*Mere Christianity*) received mixed reviews. Students either found it to be incredibly helpful or thoroughly inadequate. All expressed their approval of Sander's work, *Liderazgo Espiritual* (*Spiritual Leadership)*, as challenging and practical. Dallas Willard's book, *Renueva tu Corazón: Sé Como Cristo* (*Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ)* was also appreciated. In general, Willard's work expands the

same ideas that we covered. His focus, however, and the metaphors he uses vary from those presented in the class. As the semester moved forward, the impression formed in our mind that reading Willard's work overloaded the students with too much information and cause confusion due to the use of differing nomenclature. Upon reflection, we would wait to use Willard's work in another course that would deepen and reinforce the contents of course, *The Formation of Godly Leaders*. In its place, we would require the students to read John Bunyan's classic work, *Pilgrim's Progress*, or some other work of a similar nature. Bunyan's description in richly scripture-soaked symbolism of a believer's sojourn has the advantage of opening one's imagination to life lived in light of the biblical narrative. Besides introducing the students to classical Christian literature, we believe that reading of *Pilgrim's Progress* would allow us to explore, in light of our Christian commitments, the elements of virtue ethics—meta-narrative, teleology, community, practices, and virtue.

It became evident to us that the subject and emphasis of the course went to the core meaning of theological education. As has been stated many times before, no matter how engaging, theological education is not intended to be the mere passing on of information. Preparation for ministry and the development of pastoral skills of leadership require character. Christian character, however, is not an idea that resists characterization. All ethics are qualified ethics. For us, this means that Christian character formation cannot exist without theological formation. Either our theological commitments will define and motivate our development of Christian character, or our character will be shaped by something other than the Word made flesh. We now realize that in teaching the course, *The*

Formation of Godly Leaders, more attention should have been paid to making clear the connections between spiritual formation and the requirements of each program offered at ESEPA. We should have sought to integrate more thoroughly how systematic and biblical theology are products of the biblical narrative and how the history of Christianity gives witness to the continuing narrative of redemption.

Beyond a brief exploration of the history of theological education and the biblical exposition of virtue ethics, students needed to ponder how the classes that they had already taken and those that they were yet to take would contribute to the formation of their character. They needed to reflect on why virtue is necessary for theological education; they needed to consider their own attitudes to see if they were willing to overcome the legitimate obstacles of pursuing the goods internal to the *telos* of theological education; and they needed to ruminate on how the subject material of their studies is a constitutive aspect of achieving the *telos* of theological education. In addition, more space needed to be given to post-course commitments that would help them remain conscious of the function and goal of theological education.

Although students were required to write an essay on the commitments that they made as a consequence of taking the course and the plans they made in order to realize those commitments, the work they handed in gave no evidence of deep reflection that wrestled with the question of character formation during the time of their theological studies; neither did it demonstrate a serious interaction with the ins-and-outs of ordinary life. Unfortunately, the commitments they recorded and goals they set for themselves tended to be simplistic and moralistic.

It appears that for the students, the assignment was only one more thing that needed to be done in order to pass the course. If this observation is correct, it pushes to the foreground the limitations of formal academic education: class assignments can both generate good grades and at the same time slight character. This is not always the case, nor does it necessarily need to be the case. But it does point to the need for lusory attitudes on the part of the students. Academic requirements can be character forming, but only when they are met with lusory attitudes that seek to achieve the goods internal of theological education.

CHAPTER SIX
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In chapter one, we explored the need for Christian leaders to be men and women of sterling character in order to lead the church and its associate ministries in a manner that is consistent with the gospel. We noted the inadequacy of conceptualizing character formation in terms of values clarification in which a leader comes understand his personal values through an intense inward gaze. Without a transcendent story that serves as a true north to confirm the truth or falsity of the values one holds, these values, no matter how well they are clarified, slip into the void of subjectivity. We then looked at ESEPA's cultural and ecclesiastical context, noting the assorted reasons why character formation is an important topic for study.

Two issues were underscored: first, the cultural tendency for strong charismatic leaders to gather followers who willingly give them undue obedience and excuse the leaders' aberrant behaviors; second, the level of desertion from the Latin Church. These issues are closely related. Gómez's study revealed that while the evangelical church has experienced rapid growth, there is a equally high degree of desertion that is truly arresting; the cause for this desertion is shown to be directly linked to the character of the leaders as well as that of the church members.

Next we reviewed the fragmentation that plagues modern theological education. With the ascendancy of the Enlightenment, the educational paradigm shifted from *paideia* to *Wissenschaft* and resulted in, as Farley has

pointed out, the loss of "*habitus*, a cognitive disposition and orientation of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals."[1] We noted several outcomes of this change of focus. The first is the fragmentation of theological knowledge where theology, biblical studies, and church history were separated from praxis. This created the unintended consequence of diminishing the seminary's role in the formation of character. Another closely connected outcome that proceeded from the Enlightenment was the penchant to locate ethics in rational universal principles, which had the effect of uncoupling ethics from religious commitments and traditions. This made theology superfluous to character formation. Moreover, theological educators introduced this new epistemology into the curriculum design of Christian universities and seminaries and unintentionally raised a barrier between theology and praxis. Parker Palmer notes that modern education based on positivism, or objectivism as he calls it, creates a hidden curriculum in which objective facts are separated from the subjective reality of professors and students with the consequence that education ceases to be a quest for truth that invites personal commitment.[2] This hidden curriculum is embedded within the institutional culture of the seminary and affects the outcomes that the seminary seeks to achieve. Thus, the adoption of objectivism sets the seminary at cross-purposes with the goal of character formation.

We also noted the importance of students' preparedness for theological education. Students arrive at seminary with personal, familial, ecclesial, and

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[1] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, 35.
[2] Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey,* 31-35.

social histories that have shaped their being. Their lives and character have been significantly formed before they ever hear their first lecture or read their first assigned text. The students who enter ESEPA come from a wide range of ecclesiastical backgrounds, possessing diverse levels of biblical literacy and having had varied family-life experiences. The preparation that students possess differs widely; this, in turn, shapes their expectations with regard to spiritual formation.

We have suggested that in light of these realities there is a need for an overarching theory that would pull together the various strands listed above to address the issue of fragmentation. It is particularly important that this theory be oriented toward the formation of character and that there is a clear link between the theological commitments of the school with character formation. This overarching theory would give the professor, staff, and students a common understanding of character formation, how it is formed, and, importantly, a common language in order to furnish an agreed upon meaning of abstract terms such as "spirituality" and "character." We have argued that virtue ethics provides such a theory. The fundamental elements of narrative, teleology, community, virtue, and practice correspond well to the nature of Christian character formation and provide a usable matrix to form character within the boundaries of formal theological education.

In chapter one, we noted three important areas that could be investigated with good effect: 1) curriculum and co-curricular activities that would address the issue of fragmentation of knowledge; 2) the hidden curriculum of the institution and how its culture contributes or obstructs the

seminary's goal to form the character of its students; 3) a study of student preparedness and their understanding of character formation along with the attitudes and expectations they bring to their studies that help or hinder the achievement of the school's goal. We chose the last area for investigation and we now present the findings of our investigation.

Findings

All the students who participated in the second survey demonstrated a change of perspective regarding ESEPA's role in the formation of their character. As has been noted several times in this project, words like "character" and "spirituality" are abstract nouns; they are indeed polysemous. Consequently, understood and used in a multitude of ways, they shape students' pre-understanding and the expectations that they hold toward character formation.

The comments of Jenny, Sally, and Karen solicited in the first survey are good examples of the importance of clarifying pre-understanding. Their negative remarks concerning spirituality bordered on hostility and show an attitude that does not invite eager participation in ESEPA's efforts to form character. On the same survey, all three define spiritual formation in positive terms that diverge completely with their definition of spirituality; they apparently do not recognize the incongruity of their responses. While their definitions of spirituality might frustrate a willingness to be more 'spiritual'— logically, they would not want to become what they abhor— their definitions

of spiritual formation move them in the in direction toward being 'formed' by scripture.

Sally and Karen are excellent examples of students who come to ESEPA from varied backgrounds, having had different experiences that color the way they hear and interpret language. But they are also good examples of how a class like *The Formation of Godly Leaders* can change a student's thinking. On the second survey, both demonstrate a significant evolution in their perception of spirituality which brought more congruence between their definitions of character and spiritual formation.

Richard and George also showed development in their thinking with regard to spirituality. Richard's response question 1 on the second survey is consistent with his response on survey 1. Nevertheless, he shows progress in his thinking by mentioning the important contribution that community makes to character formation, which is a theme that was especially emphasized in the class. He does, however, limit the community to family and friends and makes no reference to the community of faith. George's definition of spirituality, however, moves from the concrete, in which he mentions the knowledge of God, attitudes, and virtues, to an abstract concept of individual wholeness.

In the second survey, all the participants demonstrate more congruence and less divergence in their definitions of character and character formation than they reported on the first survey. Sally and Karen's language is more abstract. They emphasize God-given "principles" and "values" that are put into practice. Richard shows a budding integration of the concepts presented

in class. He defines character as narrative and mentions community and various virtues. While he does not elaborate on these themes, he does demonstrate a latent recollection of the course.

As noted before, prior knowledge of ESEPA's goal to form character did not particularly affect the students' expectations. Prior knowledge does not necessarily mean high expectations, nor does the lack of prior knowledge mean low expectations. Neither does prior knowledge equal comprehension. Sally confesses that even if she had known about ESEPA's goal, she would not have necessarily understood what it meant. It was only after completing the course that she had a clearer understanding of what ESEPA is after. This is a reminder not to assume that students necessarily understand what the seminary wants to accomplish simply because they attend the new student orientation. It is necessary to repeat the seminary's objective in different venues in order to help students to see their studies as a major vehicle to form character. The course helped Karen gain a new appreciation for theology and theologians, which made the study of theology more engaging and theologians more human.

The most far-reaching change in expectation happened among the students whose pre-understanding of education had caused them to dismiss the idea of the seminary's role in character formation. Sally, Richard, George, and Roger indicated on the first survey that they had not come to the seminary expecting the school to be concerned about character formation. For them, academic knowledge stood apart from spiritual formation. They are excellent examples of the concerns raised by Farley concerning the

fragmentation of knowledge that eventuates in the loss of *habitus*.

Fragmentation was particularly evident in comments made by Richard and George in which they averred that they had never connected the study of theology with the formation of character. For Sally, Richard, and George the course made a great difference in their perception. On the second survey, each spoke positively of the course and their new perspectives. In Richard's case, he came to recognize how his classmates and the professors have been role models for him. The ESEPA community had functioned well. In Sally's case, the course stirred up in her the desire to grow by helping her see her lack of knowledge. She has amended her views concerning academic studies and spiritual formation, which has heightened her expectations of ESEPA's role in the formation her character. In George's case, the course came at the end of his studies at ESEPA. He comments that if he had taken the course at the beginning of his studies it would have given him a wider understanding of theological education and its role in his spiritual formation.

Sally, Karen, and Richard continued to separate character formation from spiritual formation. This shows that they did not grasp the idea that Christian character formation cannot be separated from spiritual formation because of the distinctive nature of the biblical narrative. If one is growing in character by being transformed into the image of Christ through the Word and Spirit within the community of faith, there can be no difference between character and spiritual formation. This separation probably indicates the influence of their prior educational experience that separates the secular from the spiritual. To allow this bifurcation to stand within theology promotes the false

idea that spiritual formation has to do only with one's devotional relationship to God detached from moral transformation. Thus we see in the students' definitions the tendency to make spiritual formation a subset of character formation or vice versa. As noted before, Sally, Karen, and Richard intuitively recognize this by the fact that their definitions of character and spiritual formation are nearly identical, except they add spiritual formation to one's personal relationship with God.

Although the second survey shows positive changes of perspective and greater congruence between definitions and expectations, there is nominal mention of the fundamental elements of virtue ethics. With the exception of a few references to biblical knowledge, God, and Christ not much is said that even obliquely points to the biblical narrative. The exception is Richard, who makes reference to the role of community and narrative. In this way he demonstrates a faintly active knowledge of virtue ethics. That is, he remembers the key terms and probably could converse about virtue ethics, even if he didn't remember all the details. At best, the other students show a passive knowledge of the subject. They are unable to remember any specifics but, if they were reminded in someway of the theory, they could probably speak intelligently about virtue ethics. As we noted in the last chapter, this has caused us to question the efficacy of the learning activities used to teach the course. Each concept was given adequate coverage during the semester, especially the concept of narrative. The students were assigned to write out their personal narrative, asking the question of how their story has been taken up into God's redemptive narrative. Over the semester this exercise took up

one-third of the total hours of the course, and the students were enthusiastic both about their personal insights and the group experience. But it does appear to have been as effective as first believed.

Again, except for Richard, all the students' responses show an individualistic focus, and they do not make even faint allusions to the Christian *telos*. Even Richard, who speaks of community, does not mention the community of faith and the importance that it plays in the formation of character. Admittedly, virtue ethics is a complex subject. For most of the students the course was an introduction to many new concepts and how those concepts interrelate with multiple aspects of their lives. Without some type of reinforcement, it is not difficult to see why students would tend to forget what had learned in class. Also, it needs to be pointed out that the students' responses to the second survey are not wrong as much as they are inadequate.

Recommendations

Based on this study, we want to make following recommendations to ESEPA's professors and staff. First, we recommend that this study and the results that it has garnered be presented as a seminar to ESEPA's faculty and staff. In order to adequately summarize the many facets that make up this project, the seminar would require, at minimum, four hours. It would include a PowerPoint presentation, written notes, discussion groups, and an annotated bibliography. The purpose of the presentation would be to inform and to inspire. In terms of information, the faculty and staff need to know the historical development of theological education, especially how the changes

that came about in the modern period have impacted the goal of character formation. They also need a working knowledge of virtue ethics; and they need to be made aware of the results of our investigation of the students' pre-understanding and expectations concerning character formation. It is hoped that the presentation of this material will inspire a call to action. At the end of the seminar we will propose that the faculty and staff make a commitment to deepen their knowledge of character formation, first by pursuing a careful study of available material and, second, by developing a plan of action to implement changes. If the faculty and staff respond positively to the proposal they will need to move purposefully toward change. However, in order to put into place an effectual program to form character, it is necessary to avoid rushing pell-mell to produce a program that fails due to the lack of essential underpinnings. The subject is complex and its complexity needs to be respected. Therefore, we recommend the following steps and timeline:

1. Within two weeks following the presentation, a list of selected books to be read should be circulated among the members of the faculty and participating staff. The reading will cover two specific areas: the history of theological education and the theory of virtue ethics. In the former area, two books are essential: Edward Farley's *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* and Robert Banks' *Re-envisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*. Highly recommended supplemental reading in this area include Parker Palmer's *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey,* David Kelsey's two works, *Between*

Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate and *To Know God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School,* and Richard Niebuhr's work, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry.*

In the latter area, two works are especially relevant: Joseph J. Kotva's *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* and Jonathan Wilson's *Gospel Virtues: Practicing Faith, Hope and Love in Uncertain Times.* These two works have the desirable quality of offering readily accessible explanations of virtue ethics without being overly technical or simplistic. Important supplemental readings include Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue,* James Wm. McClendon's *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol. 1,* Stanley Hauerwas' *The Peaceable Kingdom,* and Richard's Hays' work, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament.*

The duration of this first phase will be three months. During this time, the faculty and staff will meet once a month to discuss their readings and to begin forming ideas for applications.

b. Phase two would be implemented over a two month period. A committee appointed from among the faculty and staff will produce a whitepaper based on their readings that articulates a working definition of character and its formation within theological education. The whitepaper should make clear the rationale that stands behind ESEPA's effort to form the character of its students; it should discuss both the advantages and limitations that confront the seminary's endeavor to form character and make recommendations concerning the implementation of any changes deemed necessary. When the whitepaper is completed, it will be

presented to the faculty and staff for discussion and, with their endorsement, it will serve as a guideline to evaluate ESEPA's curricular and extra-curricular programs.

c. Phase three would cover another two month period in which the faculty and participating staff members would be divided into working committees to establish goals and objectives that move the school toward concrete application. The committees will be divided into two work groups. Based on the findings of the whitepaper, the groups will scrutinize ESEPA's curriculum and extra-curricular activities in order to form goals and objectives and will recommend specific proposals for their implementation.

It needs to be clearly understood that what is contemplated here is not a complete overhaul of the present curriculum or an entire dismantling of all extra-curricular activities. Rather the committees will be charged with evaluating ESEPA's programs in order to find ways of integrating the goals of character formation within existing curriculum and supplementary offerings. It may certainly be the case that the study will indicate a need for some substantive changes. The focus, however, is not on adding more course offerings or extra-curricular activities; rather, it is on finding ways to co-opt *Wissenschaft,* mitigating its negative effects, and unearthing ways to interlace consistent reinforcement of character formation into the seminary's programs. Although some courses lend themselves readily to a discussion of character formation, all course offerings need to reinforce the school's effort to shape

character. In many cases this will mean nothing more than reminding students of the seminary's *telos* and how virtue is necessary to achieve the goods internal to theological education. Integrating character formation into the fabric of ESEPA's programs would strengthen this area of endeavor and go a long way to reverse the tide of waning knowledge that the students demonstrated in the second survey.

Much the same can be said concerning extra-curricular activities. All extra-curricular activities such as chapel, spiritual emphasis week, and seminars are forums that reinforce the need for virtue and character and are instruments through which it is formed. They need to be integrated, however, with course offerings and evaluated to see if they are indeed functioning as means to achieve the goods internal to the seminary's *telos*.

In light of these proposals, two caveats need to be mentioned: first, dividing the committees into separate groups to evaluate curricular and extra-curricular activities is meant to be a complimentary venture. Once the committees have finished their particular assignments, they will be reunited to complete the task at hand. The final product needs to be the end result of efforts expended by the entire group. After all, it is the whole institution that functions to achieve the goal of character formation. Second, it would be a fundamental error to relegate character formation to one course or extra-curricular activity, since this would only reinforce the fragmentation of knowledge found in modern education.

d. The primary objective of phase four is implementation, which consists of two stages. The first deals with delegating responsibilities and establishing a reasonable timeline to accomplish defined objectives; this part of phase four can be completed in a prompt manner. The second stage consists of putting in place planned evaluations to monitor the progress and effectiveness of goals and objectives. Ideally, this would include a yearly assessment that would be repeated over a period of five consecutive years in order to gather data and feedback from professors, staff, and students. The data gathered from these evaluations would form a baseline for further study and action.

It is hoped that, by involving the faculty and staff in the process of filling out and extending ESEPA's goal of character formation, several important outcomes will impact ESEPA's institutional ethos. First, through the study of the required readings, a common understanding and language concerning character formation will be generated that will facilitate discussion among the faculty and staff and will clear the way for ESEPA to be more fruitful in its endeavors. Second, it is hoped that the process of working together will create a wide-ranging sense of ownership that invites involvement in the school's efforts and generates an *esprit de corps* that brings a sense of purposeful community focused on achieving the goods internal to theological education's *telos*. In this way, the process will serve as a stimulus to interpersonal growth, making a positive impact on ESEPA's institutional ethos and providing a model for the formation of godly character. We believe if these steps are taken

this study will have served its purpose as a pilot project that can be used by other theological institutions that share a common vision with ESEPA.

2. Secondly and closely related to the first suggestion, we recommend that the school continue to offer *The Formation of Godly Leaders* or a related course. Ideally, this would be done in conjunction with the work accomplished by the professors and staff, as suggested in the prior recommendation. That is, in order to fit into the overall scheme of the ESEPA's efforts, the course would need to be evaluated by the committee(s) that the seminary's leadership appoints to consider the integration of character formation into the school's curriculum. This would strengthen the focus and content of the course, making it a better model for other institutions; and it would also serve to articulate to the students the faculty and staff's agreed upon commitment to character formation, giving gravitas to the course.

3. As has been noted, much depends on the understanding and cooperation of the faculty and staff to realize ESEPA's aspiration to form character. For this reason, once the process of evaluation has been completed and goals and objectives have been defined, recorded, and implemented, we recommend that new professors and staff members be oriented to the school's philosophy of character formation, its goals, and ways to carry out those aims. This will mean preparing a manual containing the material from the seminar that is yet to be presented to the faculty and staff; it also means delegating the responsibility to a professor or staff member to

oversee the orientation of new professors. It also requires the exercise of wisdom in hiring new professors and staff. ESEPA must guard against hiring personnel of questionable character who, by word and deed, do not reflect the moral ethos of the institution.

4. In the first survey, half of the class disclosed that they were unaware of ESEPA's objective to form the character of its students, and more than half reported that they had no expectation for the seminary to do so. Therefore, in addition to the new student orientation offered at the beginning of each semester, we recommend that ESEPA produce and make available material that explains what the seminary hopes to achieve, why it is essential to theological education, and how the school intends to achieve this goal. This material can take the form of a printed brochure and should appear in the school's catalogue and on the school's website.

Further study

1. The present study was limited to one course given over a fifteen week semester and a six month follow-up. In order to measure the long-term effect of the course, the students who took the course should be followed-up for a period of five years. In addition, the course should be offered again, collecting data in the same manner as the first study. The data gathered from subsequent classes would be compared with preceding ones in order to discover tendencies and to track changes. The study should run for a minimum five consecutive years in order to produce a reliable profile of students' attitudes and expectations.

Additionally, this investigation needs to be expanded among ESEPA's student body. In order to create a credible baseline, a quantitative survey covering the same issues of definition of character and expectations should be taken among the student body. For this to take place as efficiently as possible, the questionnaire should be made part of the registration process and required to be handed in with registration forms. This would guarantee a high percentage of returned documents, streamlining the collection data. To simplify the work of analysis, the data gathered from the quantitative study should be evaluated by computer. Moreover, in addition to the quantitative gathering of data, qualitative interviews should be conducted with a number of students who have not taken the course *The Formation of Godly Leaders*. In order to avoid the cultural problem of *quedarse bien,* which we encountered in conducting this project, students of credible character should be recruited to conduct and record the interviews with fellow ESEPA students. The data gathered from the quantitative survey and interviews would be analyzed and then compared with the results of the quantitative data gather from the class. The information that comes from these various sources will become a feedback loop that will inform and direct the school's efforts to form the character of its students.

2. As already noted, in our data log we raised the question of which learning activities best fit the teaching of virtue ethics in the context of theological education. In large part, the answer to this question depends on the outcomes that are sought. But it may also depend on the social

circumstances in which the course is taught. Seen from this perspective, there are several questions that can be raised for investigation. Does the context of academic education, with its deep roots firmly planted in the Enlightenment, overly influence institutional culture so that expectations are inevitably pulled toward *Wissenschaft*? Or does formal theological education, with all the caveats that we have noted, offer a more or less favorable environment in which to form Christian character? Closely related to these questions is the question of whether the class is best taught in a formal or informal setting? Would teaching the course in a less formal setting have a negative or positive impact the outcomes? Would teaching the course off campus improve or diminish the impact of the class? An investigation that compares the outcomes of the class, taught in different contexts and social groupings, would help to answer these questions. The outcomes of the class taught on campus could be compared to the outcomes of the same class taught off campus. A comparison could also be made between the course being taught academically, that is, with normal academic requirements such as assigned readings, term papers and exams, and the course taught to a church group with little or no requirements. The results of this comparative study would facilitate the seminary in the choice the best learning activities.

3. As briefly mentioned in chapter one, the institution's culture and its hidden curriculum impact all aspects of its goal to form character. As an important follow up to the present study, we recommend an investigation be conducted that would explore ESEPA's institutional culture, describing

both its positive and negative facets. The emphasis of the study should be on discovering out how the institution's culture encourages or discourages the achievement of its goal to shape the character of its students. In order to avoid the perception of bias in the study, and to steer clear of possible dissention, an outside consultant should be contracted to conduct the investigation.

APPENDIX

The Formation of Godly Leaders
MP-MT 2622
Professor: Jeff David

I. Description:

This course seeks to investigate the process the formation of a Christian leader's character within theological education; and the importance of character formation a leader's long-term effectiveness. The course consists of an investigation into the theory of virtue ethics and the role that biblical, psychological, social and historical resources play in the formation of character. The course has a strong theoretical base, yet its focus is practical and makes necessary the willing participation of each student.

II. Objectives:

A. Recognize and appreciate the important role that the biblical narrative plays in our spiritual formation.

B. Recognize and appreciate how the character of a Christian leader impacts his ministry regarding vision for ministry and his effectiveness as leader.

C. Recognize and appreciate the social dynamic of our spiritual formation.

D. Know what Christian virtues are and how they are formed.

E. Be able to indicate the individual and social practices that form the leader's being.

III. Methods and Learning Activities

A. Reading: the student will complete the assigned reading according to the calendar.

B. Book reviews: the student will write a book review for each of the assigned tests. The review should be 2-3 pages single space.

C. Each student will participate in a weekly small group, a time set aside during the class time to hear personal narrative and experience community

D. Each student will write an essay on their personal narrative entitled, "My Spiritual Pilgrimage. The essay should be 5-8 pages in length single space. This will become the basis of small group interaction.

E. During the semester, each student will keep a personal diary.

F. At the end of the course, each student will write a personal evaluation of how his or her participation in the course affected their personal growth.

IV. Evaluation

A. Book reviews, 20%

B. Essay, Spiritual Pilgrimage, 20%

C. Personal Diary, 20%

D. Personal Evaluation, 25%

E. Small group participation 15%

V. Required Texts.

A. C. S. Lewis Cristianismo…¡y nada más! pp. 77-147. (Editorial Caribe)

B. J. Oswald Sanders, Liderazgo Espiritual (Editorial Portavoz)

C. Dallas Willard, Renueva Tu Corazón (Editorial CLIE)

VI. Class Calanedar

Date	Class Theme	Reading and Assignments
9/3	Intro., Theological Education as Leadership Development.	
9/10	The Goodwind Template of Leadership	
9/17	Leadership and character	Lewis pp 77-147
9/24	Character: Hunter's definition; Intro to virtue ethics	Willard chaps. 1-3; 1st book review, Lewis
10/1	Narrative: The story that shapes our lives	Willard chaps. 4-5
10/8	Narrative and self-understanding	Willard chaps. 6-7
10/15	The biblical narrative: The story of God's love	Willard chaps. 8-9
10/22	Teleology: Living in the light of the future (part 1)	Willard chaps. 10-11
10/29	Teleology: Living in the light of the	Willard chaps. 12-13

	future (part 2)	
11/5	Community: the place where character is shaped	
11/12	Cross: The paradigm of faithfulness to God	2nd book review, Willard
11/19	New Creation: the resurrection procession	Read Sanders
11/26	The virtues of Christian Leadership (part 1)	
12/3	The virtues of Christian Leadership (part 2)	3rd book review, Sanders
12/10	Theological Education and character formation	Personal Evaluation

Class Outline: The Formation of Godly Leaders

1. Theological Education as Leadership Training

    a. An historical overview of theological education—

        i. *paideia*

        ii. *Wissenschaft*

    b. How the history of theological education affects our expectations

        i. Fragmented knowledge—the Fourfold Encyclopedia

2. The Goodwin template of leadership: calling, character, competencies, and community—an overview

    a. Calling: God's invitation to holiness and service

        i. God's call—the basis of the leader's identity: Sonship

        ii. God's call—the basis of the leader's sufficiency

3. Leadership and character

    a. Why character is important for leaders

        i. It gives credibility to the leader

        ii. Its impact on the organization one leads

            1. It builds equity

            2. It fosters trust

            3. It sets the example

    b. Why character is important for Christian leaders

        i. Christian leaders are role models for the community of faith

4. Character: Hunter's definition

    a. Moral discipline--creed that has become conviction

b. Moral attachment: the ideal that inspires, the affirmation of commitments to a larger community

c. Moral autonomy: no coercion but freely given obedience

d. The habits of the heart and the grammar of faith

e. The importance of the ordinary: daily decisions, attitudes

5. Virtue Ethics: an overview (narrative, teleology, community, virtue, practices)

6. Narrative: The story that shapes our lives (preliminary considerations)

a. *Los Cuentos de Tía Panchita* (Costa Rican fairy tales)

b. The big questions of life, symbols, and praxis (worldview)

7. Personal narrative and self-understanding

a. The double knowledge: our knowledge of ourselves and God's knowledge of us. {See Calvin's Institutes Book 1:1}

8. The biblical narrative: the story of God's love

a. The Book of Ruth: how personal narrative is taken up into God's redemptive story.

b. The life of a pilgrim—walking the adventure of faith and moving toward a fixed destination

c. Pilgrims Progress (DVD) and discussion notes

9. Teleology: Living in the light of the future

a. "What we happen to be and what we could be if we realized our *telos*" (McIntyr*e*)

i. Our *telos* defines who we are

      ii. Virtues: habits, inclinations, capacities, and attitudes that move us toward our *telos*

      iii. Playing games by the rules or why it impossible to win a soccer game by using golf clubs—the purpose of the game defines the appropriate actions and activities to play the game

      iv. Lusory attitudes, playing to win by the rules—not a trifler, spoilsport, or cheat

      v. Virtues: the skills and creativity to play the game well, a constitutive aspect of our *telos*

  b. Christ-likeness: the *telos* of Christian leadership

  c. The Christian narrative and an introduction to Hays's three fundamental metaphors (community, cross, and new creation)

10. Community: the place where character is shaped

  a. In community we learn the grammar of faith

      i. How did you learn to speak Spanish? (a question for Costa Ricans)

  b. Virtue is needed for the community to achieve its *telos*

  c. Character is formed through shared projects, mutual activities, and close relationships

  d. The biblical narrative and the community of faith

      i. Community and our Trinitarian God

      ii. The body of Christ, a charismatic community 1 Cor. 12:12-31

      iii. Moral transformation is communal, Roman chapter 12

    iv.   The community of faith as a colony of heaven—an alternative society that requires virtue to show forth the life of heaven, Phil. 3:20

    v.   Leadership is a gift of the Risen Christ to his church, Eph. 4:1-12

    vi.   A community of memory and hope

    vii.   Friendship and mentoring

11. Cross: "The paradigm for faithfulness to God in this world" (Hays)

    a.   The fellowship of his suffering, Phil. 3:10

    b.   Imitation—following the leader as he/she follows Christ, 1 Cor. 4: 16; 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; Phil. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:14ff.

    c.   The subversive nature of the biblical narrative

        i.   Learning to tell a truthful story—"I am a sinner"

        ii.   Conversion to the way of the cross

            1.   Peter's confession, Mark 8:27-33—leadership is not a road to glory

            2.   Peter and Cornelius, Acts 10

    d.   The virtue of faith(fullness): constancy--leadership in difficult times

12. New Creation: The Resurrection procession

    a.   Re-envisioning the Christian Pilgrimage—eschatology vs. teleology

    b.   Living between the times—"the already and not yet," the virtue of patience

    c.   Growing in grace, becoming what we already are in Christ—"the indicative and the imperative"

    d. The virtue of hope: The Holy Spirit as the firstfruits (the first taste of heaven) and the guarantee of our inheritance

    e. The leader as a worshiper: worship as the practice of hope, an act of subversion against the "powers"

13. The Virtues of Christian Leadership

    a. The Beatitudes

    b. The fruit of the Spirit

    c. 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 3:10-17; Titus 1:5-9

14. Theological education and character formation

    a. Learning the narrative "by heart"

    b. Living in community

    c. A willingness to allow the text to have its subversive effect on our lives

    d. The *telos* of theological education is "The increase of the love of God and man."

    e. Virtue is necessary to be theologically formed

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